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ABSTRACT

Ways in which students struggle with academic anxiety and what educators can do to help are explored in this book. The book presents examples involving students in grades K-12 who represent diverse backgrounds and were drawn from classrooms and from academic therapy sessions. How academic anxiety looks and feels from the student's point of view is detailed and vignettes demonstrate the types of questions that help the student and teacher get to the heart of problems. Each situation included is related to educational theory. The book also introduces the inverted triangle which represents the thesis, antithesis, and synthesis (resolution) of students' anxieties. The text emphasizes the difference between the pep talk and dialectic dialogue and demonstrates that a sense of community is essential for both students and teachers. Chapters included are: (1)"Struggling through Interruptions"; (2)"Toward Recovery: Developing the Dialectic Dialogue"; (3) "Everyday Interventions"; (4) "Prevention and Intervention in a Whole-Group Lesson"; (5) "Prevention and Intervention During Small-Group and Independent Work"; (6) "Providing Staff Development"; and (7) "Planning and Conducting Parent Conferences." (Includes an index.) (MKA)

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TOO SCARED TO LEARN

OVERCOMING ACADEMIC ANXIETY

CARA L. GARCIA

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TOO SCARED TO LEARN

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OVERCOMING ACADEMIC ANXIETY

CARA L. GARCIA

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FOREWORD

In this book, Cara Garcia writes clearly and movingly about students' struggles with academic anxiety and what educators can do to help. Beginning with her own experiences with math anxiety, she moves to examples with students in grades K through 12, drawn from classrooms and from academic therapy sessions.

The audience for this book, however, is not just K-12 educators, but all educators, including those working at the university level. I saw parallels to the anxious behaviors of students in my own graduate and undergraduate courses in education. Everyone experiences academic anxiety at one time or another. I have and still do. Cara argues convincingly that we should recognize and address anxiety, not only in the learning of our students but in our own continuing professional development as educators.

This is a timely book. It appears at a juncture when educators are making a paradigm shift—from a cognitive, behavioral, and positivist perspective to a constructivist and interpretivist one. In keeping with this paradigm shift, we have become increasingly aware of the role of emotions in students' classroom learning.

With a solid background in both reading education and Gestalt therapy, Cara is uniquely qualified to write about academic anxiety and students' feelings about their own learning. She presents her major points through case examples. In these rich examples, Cara shows how academic anxiety looks and feels from the student's point of view. Each vignette is related to theory. I felt I was there, watching the situation unfold, with an expert guiding me to understand the significance of what I was seeing.

One of the hardest things in a busy classroom is for a teacher to listen, with full attention, to what a student is really saying. This means not only hearing the words but sensing the emotions behind the words. The vignettes show the kinds of thoughtful questioning that help both student and teacher get to the heart of the problem. The responses of these skillful and caring teachers showed me how to frame my interactions with students who show similar signs of academic anxiety.

Cara introduces a powerful analytic procedure, the device of the inverted triangle, to represent the thesis, antithesis, and synthesis or resolution of students' anxiety. She emphasizes the difference between the pep talk and the dialectic dialogue, in which the teacher encourages students to reflect on their feelings and thought processes, on the way to developing an awareness of blocks to their learning. She reminds us that education should be a process of helping students to take control of their own destiny as learners.

Cara works in the Los Angeles area, and the students in the examples reflect the diversity of backgrounds that poses such a challenge to teachers, particularly in urban areas. The students are of varied ethnicities, including Asian and Latino; they speak first languages other than English; and some are from poor families. Cara shows the value of teachers' use of open-ended forms of instruction, such as dialogue journals and brainstorming. Lessons end with a reflection phase, during which students discuss their feelings about the academic activities and what was learned or not learned. Through these approaches, teachers allow students to show what they know, set goals for what they will learn next, and bring anxieties and concerns about their learning and relationships to classmates to the surface. In keeping with the constructivist paradigm, students develop their own understandings of the blocks to their full engagement in classroom learning. As students express their thoughts openly and honestly, a sense of community develops in the classroom. This sense of community fosters risk taking and reduces anxiety, because students know that their learning will be supported by their peers as well as by the teacher.

A sense of community is essential as well for the professional growth of educators. This book makes a significant contribution by addressing the anxieties that we feel as educators attempting to deal with the many changes implicated in the shift to a constructivist paradigm of teaching and learning. Don Graves, a leading advocate of the process approach to writing, argues that, to help children become good writers, teachers must first become writers themselves. A parallel argument applies to issues of academic anxiety. If we are to help students deal successfully with their anxieties, we must first recognize and address our own anxieties. Through her book, Cara inspires us to face issues of anxiety, in our students and ourselves, and gives us the courage and knowledge to do so.

—Kathryn H. Au
University of Hawaii

PREFACE

These are anxious times for the school community. Even current educational reforms designed to improve conditions seem to provoke anxiety.

- Performance assessment heats up students' performance anxieties.
- Efforts to make instruction more authentic run headlong into students' anxieties about thinking for themselves in our culture in which press for conformity is strong despite our fascination with the individuality of our celebrities.
- Shifts "from the sage on the stage to the guide on the side" bring up teachers' anxieties related to sharing control with students and covering the curriculum.
- Increasing referrals for learning disability services touch off the anxieties of school counselors and psychologists about the growing proportion of students to be designated and served.
- Efforts to integrate traditional and contemporary teaching practices provoke administrators' anxieties about appropriate staff development and community relations.

This book shows readers how to identify and address anxiety, whether it takes blatant forms such as test anxiety, writer's block, stage fright, or mysterious subtle forms—from work not turned in, with no clear explanation, to the student who drops out with no clear reason.

The typical approach to academic anxiety has long been the pep talk, which all too often "talks at" students. Youngsters usually get little respect for their anxious moments and are easily overrun with unsolicited advice. It is the well-trained professional who hears and sees and senses what students don't say, who takes them seriously enough to help them generate their own choices as well as give them advice. This book seeks to assist in the training of such a professional. It is a step toward establishing academic anxiety as a field of study, one that encompasses all learning anxieties, test anxiety, and ultimately school phobia.

The chapters of this book are arranged to tell an ever-widening circle of stories of students and teachers who suffer through anxious moments with various degrees of awareness of what's happening to them. Chapter 1 starts with a math anxiety autobiography by the author; then, the reader is asked to begin his or her own academic anxiety autobiography. Chapter 2 analyzes anxiety and shows how the teacher can step in to help. Chapter 3 follows with numerous examples of anxiety that occur across subjects and grade levels, even haunting students into adulthood. Several examples of educational therapy show how the school can coordinate services with community clinics and private practitioners. Chapters 4 and 5 show how a teacher can deal with anxiety issues throughout a unit of instruction. Finally, Chapters 6 and 7 show the teacher how to lead staff development, mentor her colleagues, and address academic anxiety in her parent conferencing. Characters in Chapters 3–7 are composites..

By extending the usual teacher-student interaction analysis, this book seeks to describe the complexities of lived academic experience, much of which is nonverbal and unaware. It seeks to reveal how we hide our true motivations from ourselves and each other, ironically sacrificing learning during the learning process.

Lest we try educational reforms superficially and fail, a profession unresolved between the need to change and the need to maintain, we need to think through the demands of our assignments and assessments to learn what problems they pose for students, teachers, and parents from their own points of view. Here psychology and education intersect profoundly—in the study of academic anxiety, we find a common ground. May this book help it be solid.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cara L. Garcia is Professor of Education in the Graduate School of Education and Psychology (GSEP) at Pepperdine University. Before joining the university faculty, she was a teacher and teacher-adviser for the Los Angeles Unified School District. She was first assigned to the English Department of Markham Junior High in South Central Los Angeles. Seeing the anger and anxiety of many of those youngsters around literacy issues, she volunteered to participate in extensive staff development by the District to teach reading. Later, she taught ESL and reading to recent Asian and Hispanic immigrants at Belmont Senior High School near downtown Los Angeles. At the high school level, she encountered the language learning anxieties of the ESL students and the reading and writing blocks of the native English speakers who were struggling with basic literacy skill development. She went to graduate school at night at Cal State L.A. and switched from a major in English to a major in reading to better address the increasing amount of student literacy needs she faced every day. Yet, nothing in her studies helped her address the academic anxiety to her satisfaction.

Her work with reading difficulties stimulated an interest in more cognitive and humanistic approaches to instruction. She began doctoral work in reading and educational psychology at the University of Arizona. Soon thereafter, in the height of the 60s-that-happened-in-the-70s, she participated in a Gestalt therapy group and realized that it is a learning model that resolves anxiety through self-awareness and personal responsibility. When she returned to Los Angeles, she pursued this interest, becoming certified as a Gestalt Educational Counselor by the Gestalt Therapy Institute of Los Angeles in 1981. Since that time, she has continually searched for ways to integrate gestalt work into teacher and administrative training. She has presented and published in the area of academic anxiety and currently serves on the Executive Board of the Institute.

Her current interests include making multimedia presentations of academic anxiety work in the clinic and tutoring programs at GSEP. This effort won a Celebrate Literacy Award from the International Reading Association.

Readers are encouraged to respond to this book by e-mailing the author at cgarcia@pepperdine.edu.

1

STRUGGLING THROUGH INTERRUPTIONS

Anxiety is an experience that we all know. Consider "anxiety" as used in everyday language. We say we are "anxiously awaiting news," when we mean it is difficult to carry on with our everyday tasks until we hear that news. In other words, our concentration in the present moment is interrupted because our minds jump to that future time when the news we are expecting will arrive. Emotionally, we may experience the tension between the present and the future with elation, agitation, doubts, or fears. Physically, we often find ourselves breathless with anticipation or fear.

When we are anxious, the normal energy of everyday life increases in pitch. Then concentration becomes a challenge because excitement is transformed to anxiety, a difficult state in which to live and one in which it is nearly impossible to learn. Anxiety is commonplace in the learning process, and because it interrupts learning, we need to define it and recognize its occurrence. To differentiate it from the anxiety we experience related to other issues in life, we can think of the anxiety that occurs during the learning process as "academic anxiety."

For a beginning definition of academic anxiety, we can rely on popular language: "Test anxiety," "writer's block," "stage fright," "speech block," "reading block," "math anxiety," "technophobia," and "science anxiety" are common expressions, each conveying some type of interrupted concentration that interferes with an academic task. Participation in academic processes requires sustained concentration on the part of the learner, but concentration can be interrupted at any moment. That interruption results in what we commonly call a block.

Internal Interruptions

Although it is certainly true that concentration can be interrupted by outside disturbances, here we will concern ourselves primarily with the loss of concentration that comes from *within* the person. A telephone can be unplugged, but it is difficult to "unplug" the mind's own call away from the task at hand. When someone is trying to speak, read, write, or study and is having difficulty concentrating on the moment-by-moment process that is needed to accomplish the task, it is the *internal* interruptions that seem most common, indeed, most difficult to surmount. For example, the student who has a speech block may "go blank" at the moment he or she is called on to answer in class; concentration has been interrupted by fear. The student who has writer's block may try to avoid the moment of actual writing, staring at a blank paper, or may begin, only to be tortured moment-by-moment by an inner critic. During reading assignments or while reviewing notes for tests, one's mind may wander elsewhere and be brought back sharply to the moment by the sudden recognition that one hasn't any idea of what one has been reading.

Blocked performance may appear to be a state of suspended animation, of being stuck or frozen, but this is not so. The person with a block is in a dynamic state of shifting attention to other needs, a shift that splits attention, so that he or she begins to vacillate between being on-task and off-task. The questions must be raised: Where does that student's attention go when concentration is off-task rather than on-task? What changes take place phenomenologically, that is, in the student's perceived reality? If we knew the answers to those questions, we could begin to understand better how to increase on-task concentration. Our first charge, then, is to explore the off-task experience.

A useful starting place will be our own experiences with anxiety. If we examine our own learning process, we are likely to be more empathetic toward our students' processes. I'll offer my own "math anxiety autobiography" as a beginning place.

Word Problem Anxiety Autobiography

I have been anxious about word problems ever since the sixth grade. I didn't know what you were supposed to do to solve them. I just faked it. I'd just try nearly any old thing just to be done with them. The teacher never noticed.

When I started junior high, I tried to keep a low profile but my math teacher found me out. He never let anybody off the hook. I got B's and maybe C's; I wasn't the worst student in any of my classes.

In high school, I was on the college prep track, but I just took the minimum math—algebra and plane geometry. There really weren't ever that many word problems in homework, and only a couple on tests, so I got by. Actually, I enjoyed geometry. I don't think we had any word problems there.

In college (as undergraduates), we had to take placement exams our freshman year, and I was required to take remedial math. I think it was because I'd been up half the night before the placement exam learning how to play Hearts with the kids across the hall in the dorm. Anyway, I was tired, not anxious, and I don't think there were any word problems on that exam. Remedial math turned out to be going to a room every week and getting worksheets of problems like those you missed on the test. I had to do division of mixed fractions and I don't remember what else. That was all the math I had in undergrad school, except for the math we did in science classes and sun path problems in geology. But I think it was rote, and I did it OK.

In my master's degree research classes, I had to learn statistics. It was obvious to me that "statement of the problem" meant "word problem from your life," but we used Elzey's (1974) statistics primer and I understood it as well as anyone, even liked thinking about the normal curve. Nevertheless, I wrote a case study for my master's thesis, neatly sidestepping any encounters with even the most central of tendencies, statistically speaking!

When I took the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) for entrance to the University of Arizona (U of A), I did all the math I could, grabbed the remaining pages, and turned them over to the "STOP HERE!" page. My math score on the exam was so low that the U of A Office of Graduate Studies sent me a letter telling me to take statistics in my first semester. As a reading major, I read between the lines to see that they were really saying, "Best case scenario is that you need all the time you can get to learn this and worst case scenario is that, if you're going to flunk out, you might as well do it right away."

Knowing that my low math GRE was working against me, I visited the U of A Reading Department so they could see that I was an Anglo (because my surname is Garcia, it's often assumed that English is my second language) and also so I could explain my "math problem," as I called it in those days. They had seen my scores and had a variety of responses: "When they're low they're not predictive, when they're high they are," and "We thought there was some kind of language interference."

It was while I was taking my doctoral studies at U of A that I became involved in Gestalt therapy. As I watched my fellow group members do "gestalt experiments" with conflicts, I realized that they were bringing their backgrounds of beliefs and values and fears to their current experiences, often in ways that they found deeply dissatisfying. As an educational psychology minor, I knew that gestalt was a root of cognitive psychology. I flashed on David Ausubel's (1968) statement that the most important thing in learning something new is what you already know. And here it was happening right in the present. I saw how Gestalt therapy is that same learning model, I saw how therapists were facilitating a person's learning about himself or herself and how he or she functions. I could see that we educators need to facilitate students' learning about themselves in academic tasks. That's when I knew my "math problem" was "math anxiety for word problems." I was able to really help myself recover from the anxiety by learning more about myself as a learner—learning from my internal interruptions rather than trying to push them away and get back on-task.

Now I know that something as simple as a statistics text author's writing "It is interesting to note that . . ." touches my resentment: "I have to do this, but I don't have to find it interesting!" This can escalate into resentment for having to learn the material, resentment for anything I don't like about the professor, and resentment that it has to be in my course of study. This takes me all the way off-task to the decision about why I enrolled. Then I start to doubt whether I belong in the program.

And that's where I am today. The good news is that I know what my issues are so I can work with them. Although I still get anxious, I recover and regulate the anxiety just as I've learned to regulate other aspects of my learning. I would rather know all I can about my struggle than struggle without knowing why.

Today, I'm learning how I can use my math anxiety story to help others, even though it's scary to be so self-disclosing and potentially vulnerable. I would rather self-disclose to show others that they are not alone than be silent and let others think that I don't struggle in the same way and that they are alone and different from me. Although our issues are different, we struggle just the same.

Write Your Autobiography

Choose an area of academic anxiety and write a first-person autobiographical account of it. I am assuming that you actually have experienced academic anxiety because my work with academic anxiety indicates that it is universal; apparently no one gets by unscathed.[1]

Now search your autobiography and mark spots that indicate where you concentrate and where there are internal interruptions with or without recovery:

C indicates that you were concentrating on the task in your usual style. We often take concentration for granted so you might find only an allusion to it.

I indicates that you were interrupted internally, impairing your concentration. It may have been just for a moment or two at a time. For example, if you wrote, "I hated it when teachers would say we were going to have essay exams," you might mark this as an interruption in which you had a moment of hate about whatever it is that you hate about essay exams. For this moment, your concentration was impaired and you had a need to recover from the interruption and resume concentrating.

R indicates that you recovered from the interruption and were able to resume concentration.

Now notice any patterns that might emerge from your coding:

CIR would be a best case scenario, probably a typical learning experience for most people.

CIR, CIR, CIR would mean repeated internal interruptions, a signal of an anxious situation.

CI would mean an internal interruption without recovery, an anxious-sounding situation.

CI, CIR, CI in some pattern signals a struggle that needs attention.

There are three internal interruptions in my autobiography that stand out for me. They are my earliest academic anxiety memories because they have weighted me down the longest and I think they are the most potent background that I bring to new learning situations I perceive as involving word problems:

1. When it hit me in sixth grade that, for the first time in school, I was falling behind others, having trouble learning something. Because I tried to rationalize rather than recover, it was my first CI pattern.
2. When I started seventh grade, I vacillated between hopelessness and hope (which gave me some relief). My pattern was repeated CI, CIR.
3. When I realized, still at the beginning of seventh grade, that I could listen in class and psych out how to learn from my classmates. It was my first CIR.

From Autobiography to Vignette

Using those marked interruptions from the autobiography, elaborate to tell each one in the first person, present tense, so it constitutes a vignette. Whereas the autobiography tends to *tell*, the vignette *shows* what it was like for you to experience the academic anxiety.

Make up the dialogue and nonverbal communication that you imagine took place. Don't worry about changing the truth. The emotional core of the story will be true: That is what you have been carrying with you to this day. It is the basis of the internal interruption impairing your performance. You can learn about your anxiety as a way to begin to resolve it.

Here are three vignettes that I wrote, one for each of the three spots that I marked in my autobiography. I'll never forget the feelings, but I've made up some of the dialogue to show what it was like for me.

First Concentration-Interruption Struggle

I'm in Mrs. Hall's sixth-grade class, sitting in the fifth seat back in the first row of wooden desks, the kind with real ink wells and flipdown seats. Dick Soule sits in front of me and, although I don't like him nearly as much as I will when we get to junior high, I like him enough to ask him for help with word problems.

I hate word problems because I can't do them. It's not the words; I read them and read them, but I have no idea what arithmetic to do. "Two men earn eighty-five dollars for painting a house in five eight-hour work days. They each work the same number of hours and earn the same wage. What is the hourly wage for each man?"

I think, "Two men, eighty-five dollars. Divide?" I see the clapboard siding of Uncle Harry's white farmhouse where we lived when I was in kindergarten. My dad painted that house and his friend George came to help him. It took a couple of days. I wanted to climb up their scaffold—the pipes were like jungle gyms—and walk across the plank that they walked on but I wasn't allowed. "Two men, five days. Multiply?"

Oh, I can't get it, can't even get how to start it. Finally, I just whisper to Dick, "Number 7," and he whispers back, "Five times 8 times 2 into 85." I do what he says and go to the next problem. I feel like I'm cheating, but just a little bit because if I asked Mrs. Hall she would tell me the same thing, sort of.

When Mrs. Hall goes over the word problems, she reads one and says, "What are you supposed to do?" and some kids call out the right answer—divide, multiply, whatever—and she does it on the board. She turns around and steps aside so we can all get a good look at her arithmetic. Then she moves a little to the right and goes to the next problem. At the end of the lesson, she has left a trail of arithmetic across the board in her little, curly-numbered writing. I know I could solve any of the problems if they were just arithmetic, but I don't know how to get from the word problem to the little arithmetic problem. I stare at the board, baffled.

Luckily for me, there are only a couple of word problems on each of her arithmetic tests. I always get them wrong, but I still get B's. So

I don't really get in trouble, but it's the first time that I haven't been able to do a required school assignment.

But the word problems keep getting harder, and stupid, too, asking about things that no one in his right mind would ever ask about, two trains leaving a station, frogs hopping half of their last hop. I don't have any bone to pick with the problems where people are trying to divide something up or figure out their spendings. They just don't use any common sense. Why don't they just reckon, like when the farmers say, "That'd be 'round about so-and-so, I reckon." You don't need paper and pencil in the field. Sure, you might work out something with a stick in the dirt but not that often.

Already my dad has figured out that there's something wrong. He saw that I was sitting at the dining room table with my math homework for so long that he asked me what I was doing and I had to tell him that I didn't get word problems. He tries to help me. This is scary because I really don't have much of a relationship with him; although I call him Dad, I am his adopted niece. In general, I avoid him. I keep a low profile with most grown-ups, actually.

He pulls up a chair next to me and reads the problem in his "I'll-get-to-the-bottom-of-this" voice, like that's going to make it sink in. He says, "A train leaves a station at 8 a.m. bound for a city 50 miles away. It travels at 60 miles an hour. At what time will the train arrive?"

I don't want to make him mad so I think really hard. "Fifty into 60?" I say. At this point, almost every problem has multiplication and division so I'm close enough so that he doesn't get mad. He says, "No, you have to think that there are sixty minutes in an hour. . . ."

But I don't hear what else he says. I'm angry and feel confused and cheated. I think, "Sixty minutes in an hour! That wasn't in it! How come you're supposed to think of that? That's not fair!" My bangs blow straight out as I stick out my lower lip and release a stream of hot breath up my face.

". . . and then add the 50 to 8 and it comes out 8:50, which is ten to nine. Now you do this one," and he writes out the same problem with different numbers.

I want to get my homework done and not get Dad mad at me. I struggle through the next problem, getting it wrong because I hadn't been listening when he explained it. He goes back over it and tells me what to do and I memorize it. I get through another one that he makes up. Finally he leaves me alone and I finish two more train problems and leave one undone about wages.

In school the next day, I get up to sharpen my pencil and veer off through the cloakroom that runs along the side of the classroom, opening at the front and back. In the section near the front opening, where the patrol boys hang their yellow raincoats, I write, "I hate Mrs. Hall" on the hood of one of the raincoats with my freshly sharpened pencil.

Repeated Interruptions With Partial Recovery

I'm beginning seventh grade, first day in Mr. Schoen's math class. He is signing our registration cards at his desk and we are filling out the cards for our math books. I can tell from the book that we will be doing square root, which I have wanted to do, having seen both of my sisters and my brother doing it for their homework. Like long division, their square root problems looked so orderly, streaming down their notebook paper, angling off to the right, ending in a small digit tail. Square root with its mysterious beginning—no divisor—a division problem that looks like a carpet that unrolls all by itself and runs down the page on its own.

Math is OK except for the word problems that I don't understand. I am very anxious because I see from the textbook that they form part of every lesson. I bite my lip and wonder if I can even pass this class if Mr. Schoen assigns all those problems. But of course he would; this is seventh grade. You probably have to do every problem in the whole book. . . .

When Mr. Schoen finishes the cards, he passes them back and tells us about the class. Yes, he says, we will learn square root and even begin some equations. We will have pop quizzes and unit tests. We should ask any questions that we have on our minds because probably somebody else also has those questions. No question is too dumb to ask. And we will talk about how we solved the problems. We will not just give the right answer; we will have to show our work for all problems, and we will have to read them out loud as statements and explain our solutions to the class. This will be especially important in word problems, he says, because life gives you one word problem after another when you get out of school.

I am really biting my lip now. We have to tell how we did it. I won't be able to just get the answers. This doesn't sound good, I think. I can't do it. I'll flunk! But . . . wait . . . maybe . . . not. . . . Didn't he say to ask questions? I can't! How can I say I didn't get the sixth-grade stuff in front of everybody? I can't ask questions! But . . . could that be true about other people having the question, too? I look around at the people in the class. I know about five of them who went to Foster Elementary with me. The others are from Lakeside, Longview, and the kids from the country who come on buses. Maybe some of them didn't get word problems . . . maybe the country kids who stay home a lot and work on the farm. Maybe they were absent during word problems. Maybe one of them will ask. The bell rings. I rush out with relief.

Recovery Looks Promising

The very next day, we have our first word problems because we are starting out with a review. We start with another one about trains that leave at different times and get somewhere at a certain time. Mr. Schoen says, "Now, what does this problem ask us to do?"

"Multiply and divide," answers Lucinda.

"Well, OK, but what are we trying to find out?"

Silence. I look around. Everybody is looking hard at the problem. *Nobody* has the answer. How can that be? Then Lucinda tries again in a real testy voice like she doesn't get what he means. "Well," she says, "we're trying to find which train will arrive first?"

"Yes!" says Mr. Schoen excitedly, pacing in big steps from the board to the row she sits in. "And how can we figure that out?"

Lucinda is on a roll. She starts to sound real sure of herself, like she gets the game plan now and explains how you have to figure out first how far each train is going per minute and then look at how far each has to go. . . .

I look back at the problem. OK, so you figure out that a train going 40 miles an hour is going 40 miles in 60 minutes. I get it! You think of an hour as 60, not 1! Oh, yeah, Dad said that, too. But, damn! Now what? I tune back in but she is already to the part about which train is first. Oh, well, I got part of it.

Mr. Schoen praises Lucinda for "talking us through" the train problem. He asks for someone to go through the next one in the same way. I take a deep breath and look at Number 2.

> A bus leaves the station at 9 p.m. and travels an average of 30 miles an hour for 2 miles, an average of 60 miles an hour for 10 miles, and an average of 30 miles an hour for the last 2 miles to the next stop. At what time will it arrive?

I'm thinking that this must be about averaging because it's mentioned so many times. Then Sandra Arnquist raises her hand. Mr. Schoen nods and she says, "First we have to find out how many minutes it takes to go 2 miles at 30 miles an hour and then how many minutes it takes to go 10 miles at 60 miles an hour, and then we add those to 2 more miles at 30 miles an hour, and add all the minutes to 9."

"Yes, that's it," says Mr. Schoen. "We know that it takes 60 minutes to go 30 miles, so how long does it take to go just one of those miles? We're taking 30 and dividing it into 60 parts to find out how many miles we go in one minute. That's 30 divided by 60, right?" He is busy writing 60 into 30 on the board and working it out. I look around and see that everybody is watching. I see that it makes sense.

"That means that each of these minutes the bus goes a half mile, right? So how many minutes would it take to go the two miles? Sandy, back to you . . ."

Sandy says four minutes for the first two miles, and then in her head figures that at 60 miles an hour it would be one mile a minute, and that the 10 miles would take 10 minutes. Then she figures that the last 2 miles would take the same time as the first two miles because both are at 30 miles an hour. I think, "Boy, she's fast at that," really thinking that I'm *not*. She adds up the total in her head, too. "Altogether the trip would be 18 minutes and the bus would be there at 9:18."

Mr. Schoen is so happy! "That's it, that's how it's done." He slams the book shut and puts it on his desk. "Now if you all followed along, we'll be right into new material next week."

I look at the clock on my paper with the 60 and the 30. I get it, the sense of it. I'm not fast but I could do it slower and do it right. I take a deep breath and blow it out in a whoosh of relief as I carefully fold that paper and stick it in the book to mark the page. I can get this kind of problem anyway.

From Vignette to Issues

Now code the spots in your vignette right at the moment when your concentration on the academic task was interrupted internally:

S indicates an interruption in concentration in learning caused by a skill or strategy that you needed to learn.

INTER indicates an internal interruption caused by your thoughts or feelings related to another person such as fear of criticism.

INTRA means an internal interruption caused by your thoughts or feelings related to yourself; that is, intrapersonal or intrapsychic thoughts or feelings such as self-doubt.

Now code the references in your vignette related to physiological manifestations of your anxiety: tight muscles, shallow breathing, sweating. These don't cause the anxiety in the same way that the other issues do; they are the body clues to the presence of anxiety. For example, when I was anxious, I must have been holding my breath, because I released long streams of breath that blew my bangs up. Mark your physiological issues with a P.

Now that you've identified your issues, take a moment to congratulate yourself on your willingness to tell your story and identify your issues.

Experiment—Conduct an Academic Anxiety Interview!

Ask a friend or family member to tell you his or her academic anxiety story. Listen quietly and empathically, showing that you can relate to the experience. Reflect on the story later and note the parallels to your story, especially the dynamics of concentration, interruption, and recovery as well as skill, interpersonal, and intrapersonal issues and physiological manifestations.

Note

1. If you discover that you become so anxious attempting to write the autobiography, try to discover if it's the content or format. If it's the format, try changing to an alternative such as dictating it into a tape recorder, drawing a picture, or making sounds that might express the emotional core. If it's the content and you can't bear to think of it, I recommend contacting a professional for support.

2

TOWARD RECOVERY: DEVELOPING THE DIALECTIC DIALOGUE

We have seen that our academic anxiety is complex. In this chapter, we will address our choices for recovery from our own anxious academic issues and then consider how we can use a dialectic dialogue to help our students. Finally, we will consider the roots and future of dialectic dialogue for academic anxiety issues.

Recovering Our Concentration

Building on Chapter 1, we can use a matrix to summarize and organize our concentration-interruption patterns for analysis. From your vignette, lay out the issues and derive the concentration-interruption polarity(ies) for each one. Follow the matrix in Figure 2.1. Even if your concentration is only for a fleeting moment, or just alluded to, or assumed (because you may have been physically looking like you might do the task at any moment but have not mentioned it in your vignette), acknowledge it by marking it with a C.

When we have all our issues and polarities organized, it raises our awareness of the recovery work that we need to do to resolve the tension between our desire to concentrate and our interruptions.

	Polarities	
Issues	**Concentration**	**Interruption**
Physiological	Typical physical processes	Blows, bangs
Skill	Does one problem with Dad, keeps trying at home and school	Angry at having to convert hours to minutes
Interpersonal	Takes some help from Dick, Dad, Lucinda, Sandy	Fears Dad, fears exposure
Intrapersonal	Can get Bs	Never had trouble before

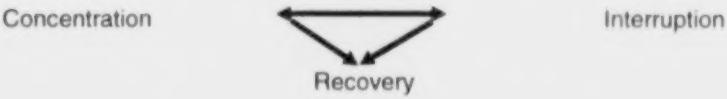
Figure 2.1. Matrix Summary of Issues in the Word Problem Vignette

Whereas our vignettes tell the story of how issues and polarities *function* in our learning, the matrix helps us see the *structure*, the gestalt, of our personal learning process.

It's important to note that, although the vacillation between the concentration-interruption polarities of an issue is like a see-saw, we don't always vacillate between the same points or even between different issues. We can vacillate from concentration to a new aspect of an old interruption. For example, the first time I was interrupted by an interpersonal issue, it was about Mrs. Hall explaining too fast, and the second time it was about not asking her for help.

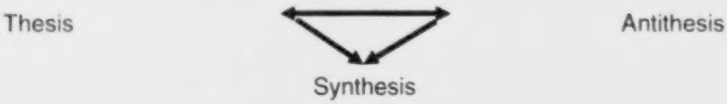
You may discover in creating your matrix that you were unaware of some of your attempts to concentrate that paralleled your interruptions. This may be because your interruptions were consuming your attention, filling your short-term memory (Miller, 1956). This may be how we lose touch with concentration on the task. This, too, is the nature of academic anxiety: *Aspects are unaware.*

Our next step is to intervene in our own issues to recover our concentration. This step adds a third dimension to each issue:



The recovery aspect restores concentration if we are able to use our awareness to choose how to deal with the interruptions issue-by-issue.

The phrase *dialectic* dialogue describes a teacher-student interaction. As we've noticed, a student can lose touch with any attempt to concentrate and express only interruptions. Conversely, the student can be aware of attempts to concentrate and not see the interruptions. For the sake of initiating the dialogue, call the aware polarity the *thesis*, the unaware polarity the *antithesis*, and the recovery the *synthesis*.



Often the teacher will initiate the dialogue and raise students' awareness of their concentration-interruption patterns. This is followed by discussion of choices for recovering concentration, closing the dialectic with a synthesis of concentration and interruption. A synthesis has elements of both thesis and antithesis; it acknowledges that each polarity has something to contribute to the student's experience. Whereas concentration contributes the possibility of growth, the interruptions contribute the possibility of safety. The synthesis is the student's way of growing cautiously and authentically.

With insight into the dialectic nature of their concentration-interruption-recovery, students can begin to monitor and self-regulate anxiety independently. They can regulate their own academic anxiety as they would any anxiety.

A brief digression from our analysis is in order to explain the dialectic. As a gestaltist, I believe that a person's perception divides into a dialectic of foreground and background as dictated by the most dominant need at a given moment. For example, if Barry enters a room full of people to find his brother Tom, finding Tom is foreground and everything else is background. The situation is organized by his need to sort out Tom/not Tom as he scans the room. At the moment he finds Tom, the foreground and background are clearly differentiated: "Yes, this is Tom, everyone else is not Tom." Barry's need is met so the foreground recedes to background and the next foreground emerges, depending on what Barry's next dominant need might be. In dialectic terms, the thesis gives rise to its polarity, the antithesis, and the two can combine to make the synthesis. The synthesis would then serve as a thesis and give rise to a new antithesis, and together they would create a new synthesis and so on. The dialectic is important because it points out the continuum of choices in a situation: If I don't want this, then perhaps I want that, the opposite, or a combination of something in between. This experience is my own phenomenology (Kaufman, 1980) which is to say the way I alone perceive and experience a situation.

You may have encountered the "dialectic journal" as a contemporary technique for writing. Students write the traditional thesis statement but then clarify it by describing what it is not, the antithesis, and create their own position as a synthesis, a new entity containing elements of both thesis and antithesis. Dialectic journals are an outgrowth of the original "dialogue journal" developed by Jana Staton (1980) to give teachers a way to dialogue individually with their students; teachers tended to write their responses in the right-hand margin of the dialogue journals and the juxtaposition gave rise to the dialectic concept. Dialectic journals have been found to enhance students' learning and willingness to reflect (Jolley & Mitchell, 1990; Millard, 1994).

With the dialectic in mind, think of your academic anxiety vignette. Wouldn't it have been supportive and instructive if there had been an empathetic teacher who would have seen your struggle and intervened to help you become aware and see ways you might recover? Although it may be too late to do so in real life, we can role-play the empathetic teacher we needed, a teacher who could initiate dialectic dialogue with us. This can be a first step to becoming the empathic teacher that our students need.

To conduct this dialogue with ourselves, we can again write a vignette, but this time an imaginary one in which we are both student and teacher engaged in a dialectic dialogue to resolve an academic anxiety issue.

Once more I will offer my own word-problem anxiety to lead the way. I wish Mr. Schoen had helped me. I know he wanted to because of the way he invited everyone to participate by asking questions. But even asking a question was too anxiety provoking to me. I wish he had been broader in his invitation, would have seen a way to read my anxiety and initiate a dialogue with me. I've written an imaginary vignette between myself and Mr. Schoen where he helps me recover. I used a third-person omniscient narrator's voice in this vignette so I can tell what both teacher and student are thinking and feeling.

Mr. Schoen reflected on the first day with his seventh-grade math class. His years of military and teaching experience had taught him how to read body language and facial expressions in groups. He had felt the tension in the classroom as Lucinda and Sandra had "walked through" the word problems. Those problems represented the most revealing starting place: They applied the arithmetic to the real world. They helped him sort out the students he was receiving from the elementary schools around town. The kids from Lakeside and Longwood usually did OK. The country kids from the little one-room schoolhouses who were often absent during planting and harvesting, and the poor kids from Stephen Elementary, by the railroad tracks and the chemical plant, did not do so well.

The Garcia girl, she must be the younger sister of the other Garcia kids, the adopted one. She'd been tense during class and avoided eye contact as she passed him at the classroom door. He knew that something was up.

Think I'll check into that one. "An ounce of prevention . . ." he thinks. *If it's an overall skill problem I would have seen it on the test scores for incoming seventh graders, so chances are there's something else going on here.*

He wrote out a summons for her during sixth period and dropped it off in the student monitor's basket in the office.

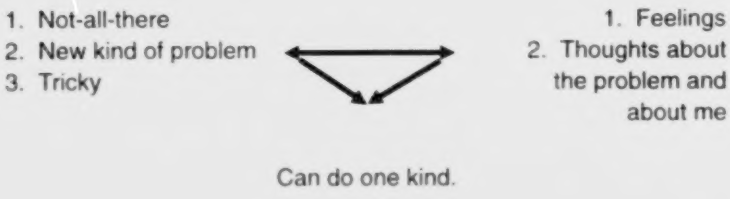
When the summons came in Cara's sixth-period history class, she felt anxious. *What's wrong? Does he know?* And she felt rebellious, too. *How come he's picking on me? I don't want his help.* By the time she got to Mr. Schoen's room, she'd vacillated on this issue a number of times.

She opened the door to his room. He was seated at the big oak teacher's desk, front and center at the head of the classroom. He looked up when he heard the door open.

Dialogue and Commentary

"Hi, Cara, sorry to drag you away from Mr. Wolf's class, but I wanted to talk to you about how things are going for you in my class. Have a seat."	He wants her self-assessment of the situation. His phrasing is open-ended and nonjudgmental in order to invite her to dialogue.
Cara sits down slowly alongside the oak desk, keeping her notebook and history book on her lap rather than putting them on the corner of his desk.	He is quiet but observant, using "wait time," giving her time to reflect before she responds to what he said.
She looks down at her hands folded on top of the history book. She notices that he is waiting for her to say something.	He thinks she is thinking and wonders if her careful movement, clinging to her books and avoiding eye contact, indicates that she fears him. Perhaps she experiences this as being in trouble.
"Well, things could be better. I really don't get word problems."	He notes she's beginning with a skill issue, describing it in very general language.
He replies calmly, "Hmm, how do you think that has happened?"	He attempts to get to the issues and process underlying this conclusion.
"I think I'm just not good at those kinds of problems where it's not all there."	She identifies a skill issue as the problem.
"Could you say more about that 'not all there' part?"	He tries to clarify the polarities of the skill issue.
"That kind where they don't tell you everything. Like when you're just supposed to know that you have to change hours to minutes in order to do it but they never tell you. That kind."	He imagines that she goes off-task somehow when she encounters a conversion step in the problem because she experiences it as being deceptive.

"Ahh," he says. He opens the math book and points to a problem. "One like this?"	He confirms that he understands her.
Cara leans over and peers at the page. Timidly, she says, "Yeah, that's one."	She still sounds timid but is engaged.
"So what you're saying to me is, 'I'm no good with conversion problems because I can't guess what they don't tell me. So I end up feeling tricked and thinking that I'm no good at them.' "	He puts both the skill and interpersonal issue in a sentence to verify with her.
Cara agrees, cautiously, "Yeah." She looks at him directly and adds more adamantly, "We never had those kind until last year."	He sees that she is defensive about this and attributes her lack of ability to her lack of experience.
Mr. Schoen's voice becomes strong and confirming. "Aha! Well, nobody likes to be tricked when they're trying to learn. So it's quite a struggle for you, eh?"	He confirms the difficulty and attempts to reframe it as a struggle to raise her awareness of the dialectical nature of her situation. He draws the dialectic triangle for her.
Cara nods, looking at the sketch.	
"My dad tried to help me but I didn't get it. Then when Lucinda and Sandy did one in class, I got how to do that one kind."	He hears the aspects of the different issues and labels them on the triangle.



"So what's happening is that you're trying to stay with the class and at the same time feeling resentful about being tricked by the book."	Seeking to both (a) confirm with her that he understands how the interpersonal and skill issues are interrelated and (b) clarify what the issues and polarities are.
"Yeah, and it's hard, you know. I mean I want to do it."	He concludes that he knows the skill and interpersonal issues now and wants to probe for an intrapersonal issue.
"But I also want to tell you that I hope you can give yourself credit for your perseverance in the face of difficulty. You're hanging in there."	Probing and observing for verification of whether she is also being hard on herself on top of everything else.
She seems to be listening and receptive.	
He continues, "So, we could work a conversion problem together, thinking aloud so you can *show* me how it comes to be a struggle for you, OK?"	This is his plan to confirm his understanding of the situation and clarify the issues and polarities.

Cara nods and starts reading the problem aloud.

> "A family of five is traveling the Oregon Trail. They are traveling at a steady pace of 4 miles per day from the Kansas River Crossing to the Blue River Crossing, a distance of 83 miles. Each person needs a minimum of 12 ounces of food each day to stay alive, and the wagon ration is currently at 50 pounds. If there's not enough food to last, the family can go hunting but they are trying to conserve bullets. Find how long the family's food will last and decide if they need to hunt."

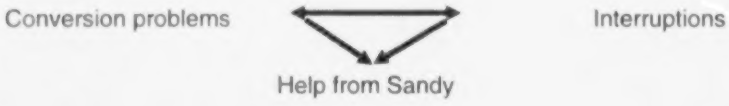
"Well, I want to find out if there's enough food. So there's 50 pounds of food and there's, uh, 83 divided by 4, uh, 21 days. So 21 into 50 goes twice with, uh, a remainder of 6. Uh, if I use a decimal point . . . Oh, I'll just make it two."	He decides that she has comprehended the problem because she can paraphrase it. Also, she knows to ask herself what the problem is asking. Is her rounding indicative of rushing through or a conscious decision?
"So, the people need 12 ounces and there's five people, so that's 60 ounces and there's two pounds."	She sounds thoroughly engaged: reflective, thoughtful.
She pauses for three or four breaths.	
"Can you think aloud?" he asks quietly.	He feels left out and asks her to think aloud as a way of including him in her process.
"So change the pounds to ounces?" She looks at him. He is silent.	This strikes him as rushing or asking him to rescue her from thinking for herself. He waits to see what she'll do.
"Well," she says, "16 ounces are in a pound so 16 times two is 32 ounces." She pauses again, staring at the scratch paper.	It works. She keeps going but with information that could just be spouted by rote perhaps.
"What's happening?" Mr. Schoen asks.	He seeks to learn her experience in the moment.
"I forgot what we're supposed to be doing."	A dramatic loss of concentration . . .
"Really? How did that happen?"	
"I don't know. I got stuck."	He checks for the extent of her awareness.

"Hmm, were there any thoughts or images that flashed into your mind and interrupted your concentration?" He pauses. "Does my being here make you anxious?"	He goes back to the interpersonal issue of several moments ago when she looked to him for confirmation of her strategy.
"Yeah, I can't think too good when someone's watching me."	Another interpersonal issue has emerged.
"So your attention switches from the problem to me watching you, eh?	He attempts to state her experience as a dialectic.
"I think, 'Am I doing it wrong?'"	She reveals the thought that interrupts her.
"Ah, so are you worried that I'm criticizing you?"	
"Yeah."	He again attempts to restate her experience as a dialectic.
"Well, that's a common worry that students have. I'm glad that you could tell me about it."	He gives her information that she can use to affirm her ability to self-regulate.
"So on the one hand, you can concentrate on the problem, but on the other hand, you lose your concentration when you think I'm criticizing you, right?"	He clarifies the issue by stating it as polarities in language common to both of them. He sketches a dilemma—

problem ⟷ criticism

"Cara, I'm glad we found out that you have a fear of criticism. The truth is that I'm not sitting here criticizing you. But I'm not going to try to convince you of that. I just want to say it once." He pauses. She looks away briefly and then returns to the problem.	He knows that fear of authority figures is common in children of many cultures and that no matter what he says, *she* has to decide whether he is telling the truth about not judging her every moment even though he will eventually grade her work. He trusts that there will be other opportunities to work on the fear of criticism.
"OK. I need to find out if they have enough food or if they need to hunt. I know that they need 60 ounces a day but they have only 32. So they have to hunt, right?"	He also knows that students will use a task to avoid talking about interpersonal issues. This is also cultural; some cultures don't teach kids how to process feelings candidly.
"Are you right?" he says, shifting the burden of assessment back to her. "I *think* so," she says.	He keeps her in control of the process. To *tell* her that she's right at this moment might undermine any progress he's made on this issue up to this moment.
"Think so. And now how is your level of confidence?"	He reflects her choice of words with a neutral tone and checks for effect.
"Better."	He wonders if her vocabulary for "feeling words" is limited.
"So on a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being high, how do you feel toward the book author for putting in problems where you have to make conversions?"	He asks about the status of the issue that she had with the word problem earlier.
"Three."	

"And how do you feel toward me for summoning you out of class and having you do this problem and talk to me openly?"	He now has mixed feelings about whether or not he'll get much information from this line of questioning but he has one last try.
"OK."	Predictable. Her affective vocabulary is limited or she's unwilling to show it.
"Well, I just want to say that, as your teacher, I need to probe into your thinking and your feelings, too, to help build your confidence in yourself." He pauses, checking her face for understanding.	He attempts to facilitate *her* decision that she can do it (a) because he believes in general that she has to build her own confidence, (b) because he lets his actions show that he believes in her ability, and (c) because she is sensitive to his judging her, and giving a good judgment now would demonstrate that he is judging her.
"But what *you* think is as important as what *I* think," he says, emphatically.	
"OK," she replies, cautiously.	He notices that her face has brightened a bit and her tone of voice is lighter and her pace a bit quicker.
"So let's make a contract for what we each will do to help you with conversion problems, OK?"	He feels satisfied that he understands her phenomenology well enough to move on to a contract for addressing her issues.
"OK."	
"Can you think of one thing you can do to help yourself?"	He offers her the lead.
"I can get help from Sandy. She's my neighbor."	She indicates that she'll address the skill issue.



"And I will stay in touch on this by checking with you in class. And we can meet again if you want. OK?"

"OK."

He follows her lead. He trusts that they will also be addressing the interpersonal issue but not explicitly.

"How about a smile?" Mr. Schoen says, and she smiles shyly at him. He pats her shoulder, enters the time on her summons slip, and stands up.

Knowing her issues and how they interrupt her concentration, he has a contract that will be a foundation on which they can build.

"OK. Thanks, Mr. Schoen." She shoves the scratch paper into her history book, flashes him a brief smile as she takes the summons slip, and scurries out the door.

He thinks she's rushing a bit to get away quickly. It seems that she is self-conscious with attention from an authority figure. "Hmmm. We have a way to go in establishing a comfortable relationship. She doesn't take help easily," he reflects, as he watches the door close behind her.

Analyzing the structure of the vignette reveals phases of the overall interaction that we can use in our teaching:

- Dialogue begins with the student's self-assessment, "Tell me about your experience." This reveals the issues of which the student is aware.
- Dialogue continues with open-ended questions: "Can you show me what it's like for you when this happens? Would you be willing to think aloud and talk about your feelings?"
- Specific probes are used during the "showing" to verify observations and raise awareness: "You feel deceived by the author and the teacher too?"
- Compare and contrast the telling with the showing so both teacher and student are sharing the same reality: "So it's quite a struggle to work the problem when you feel tricked, eh?" In this phase, the student often experiences relief; the student knows for the first time what has been going on.

- Discuss the issues and polarities that make up the anxiety and make a contract for how to approach the situation: "What's one step you could take to do something about this?" In this phase, the student often experiences increased self-efficacy for taking responsibility and improving learning.

Dialectic Dialogue Challenges Us to Grow Professionally

Dialectic dialogue is at once a time-honored tradition and a new perspective on teacher-student interaction. It challenges us to learn a new way of interacting and add it to our professional repertoire:

- Interpretations of the situation cast as hypotheses of what the student may be experiencing help the student become aware and responsible for learning more about her own learning process. Mr. Schoen framed his questions so that I could confirm that he understood and accepted my anxiety. He used an "ask, don't tell" approach that raised my awareness and kept me responsible. This is at once frustrating and supporting to the student.
- Raising awareness helps the student see the choices to improve learning that arise from increased awareness of the concentration-interruption vacillations. Mr. Schoen asked me what I was willing to do to confront my anxiety. I had interrupted several chances for learning conversion problems because I was interrupted and unaware of the opportunity. But he helped me focus on the interruptions long enough to see a choice I was willing to take.

Dialectic dialogue helps us relate to students in a facilitative way, openly acknowledging a struggle so it can be explored and perhaps resolved. This type of student-teacher interaction offers an alternative to the usual pep talks that we give to students. Pep talks are fine for situations in which the teacher needs to express support and positive reinforcement, but they can be counterproductive in cases of academic anxiety. In a pep talk, we tell our students that *we* know they can do it. In a dialectic dialogue we facilitate *their* decision-making process so that *they* decide for themselves that they can do it.

Rather than fix students' problems for them or rescue them from the anxiety, dialectic dialogue offers both teachers and students an opportunity to set limits so students know they are supported by the teacher and also learn that the teacher will not resolve their own conflicts. Many kindhearted teachers see students struggling in unawareness and just tell them what to do. With dialectic dialogue, the teacher can communicate a deeper form of support by raising the student's awareness so he or she can see his or her own alternatives for recovery and choose one. Use of the dialectic alternately frustrates and supports the student, when the situation warrants self-regulation.

Dialectic dialogue may be understood by some teachers as a mere technique with three steps: identify issues, clarify polarities of each issue, and choose an action. Although it is true that there is a technology to facilitating the resolution of anxiety, dialectic dialogue is not a technique per se. Rather, it is the teacher's *belief* in the dialectic nature of anxiety that prompts the teacher to dialogue with students in identifiable phases. This cannot be overstressed. The idea of phases may help a novice teacher take a risk to try a dialogue, but only when the teacher believes in the dialectic will his or her dialogues be completely spontaneous and authentic.

To reduce the art of facilitation to a simplistic technique would be counterproductive; the technique would then guide the interaction, would come between teacher and student, and would interrupt the possibility of authentic contact. Consider this comparison: As educators, we make our lesson plans but we learn not to let them come between us and our students. We learn not to rule out our flexibility to make adjustments, or even major digressions, if the feedback from our students so indicates. We do not let tools such as lesson plans and dialectic dialogue dictate our ways of relating to students. The professional growth necessary for more spontaneous and authentic dialectic dialogue is consistent with our tradition of transcending our plans.

Dialoguing for the 21st Century

In 1992, Secretary of Labor Elizabeth Dole commissioned a panel to describe the skills necessary for productivity in the workplace. The "foundation skills" detailed in "Learning a Living: A Blueprint for High Performance. A SCANS Report for America 2000" are

1. Demonstrating basic skills
2. Demonstrating thinking skills, and
3. Exhibiting personal qualities such as integrity and responsibility

Clearly, dialectic dialogue shares common ground with SCANS. It also meets the demands of student-centered education reforms designed to promote self-direction, self-pacing, and self-assessment. Dialectic dialogue would be especially relevant when instruction is shifting from teacher-directed to student-centered approaches. In such cases, students who have done well competing for grades in traditional teacher-directed situations have defined their academic self-concepts on that paradigm. They have been challenged to manage the anxiety of

- Individually written term paper graded by the teacher (writer's block)
- Individually taken objective and essay tests (test anxiety)
- Individually delivered oral reports (stage fright)

When the instructional program shifts toward student-centeredness, these students are faced with new and different challenges:

- Be a team player in a cooperative group
- Help plan a project
- Pace the progress
- Write usefully for a real audience, getting peer as well as teacher feeedback for revision
- Speak in a way that teaches classmates

We can see that the changes demand a nearly constant and quite public display of ability. The shift in instructional paradigms to student-centeredness redefines what a good student does. This is nothing less than students reinventing themselves. This shift to new, unfamiliar, public requirements can be threatening and anxiety-provoking.

The increasing use of computer technology is also reforming education along student-centered lines. Seymour Papert, the father of the Logo computing language and epistemologist at MIT, has identified the need for students to be more aware of their learning processes. When students write a program that moves a turtle graphic, for example, their logic is detailed in the programming, and therefore open for dialogue. Papert (1993, p. 84) uses the term "mathetic" to label the type of "learning about learning" that we need to increase. This is consistent with helping students become more self-aware and self-responsible: dialectic dialogue may serve as a tool to increase students' mathetic learnings.

You may recognize that the dialectic forms the basis of conflict resolution that is gaining widespread use in schools for interpersonal conflicts (Curwin and Mendler, 1988). Conflict resolution uses the term *mediation* to describe the process of developing a resolution between the polarities of the conflict. Dialectic dialogue could be conceptualized as a process of resolving inner conflicts. If students are familiar with conflict resolution, you could easily use that to introduce them to dialectic dialogue.

Another relevant area of cultural change is the development of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995). Describing the dialectic nature of worry, "the heart of all anxiety," Goleman reports:

> When fear triggers the emotional brain, part of the resulting anxiety fixates attention [*sic*] on the threat at hand, forcing the mind to obsess about how to handle it and ignore anything else for the time being. (p. 65)

Goleman seems to suggest the limits of concentration are due to short-term memory limitations (Miller, 1956), a phenomenon that Frank Smith described as a risk to general comprehension. Smith (1990) also has pointed out that we often bore ourselves in order to interrupt learning that is not appropriate. He describes a dialectic that cries for intervention from an empathetic teacher:

> Learning is so natural that we are uncomfortable and restless any time that we are unable to do it. The moment we find ourselves in a situation in which we are learning nothing, we are bored (including, most noticeably, those situations in which we are *trying* to learn). Boredom means we know so

> much about what is going on, or understand so little of it, that there is nothing to be learned. And boredom is aversive. We no more need to be taught or motivated to avoid boredom and pursue learning than we need to be taught or motivated to avoid suffocation and pursue breathing. Learning, like breathing, is a natural and necessary function of the living person, and we are immediately distressed when the possibility of exercising the function is taken from us. (p. 38)

Over the past decade, research in learning has documented that the real world of learning is complex. These complexities and interactions are being addressed in more holistic ways than they have been in the past. Instruction in the 21st century will increasingly consider how students' beliefs about themselves, the task, and the classroom environment act as mediators of their behaviors, a need supported by current educational psychologists (Bandura, 1986; Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Pintrich, 1990; Weiner, 1986). Some lines of research are increasingly holistic. Resnick and Klopfer (1989) point out that motivation and learning researchers are increasingly converging on the same learning problems:

> For many decades, research on motivation has been conducted separately from research on learning or cognition. In psychology, motivation was the domain of social psychologists, who were largely disinterested in what was learned; they cared only about how much effort or attention was expended on some task. Learning and thinking were studied by experimental or cognitive psychologists, who tended to think of motivation as a necessary motor for starting and maintaining mental activity, but not as *directly implicated in thinking itself*. Those separatist views are beginning to disappear. Alongside students of cognition who consider motivation an integral part of their concern are social psychologists who now view *cognitive processes as integral to motivation*. (p. 4)

More recently, Snow, Corno, and Jackson (1996) have pointed out the importance and difficulty of continuing research into how affective and conative (motivation and will) influence learning:

> An important goal of educational psychology is to discover the ways in which affective and conative differences among students influence learning and cognitive performance, both on immediate school tasks and in long-range educational development, and vice versa. But one should not routinely expect simple, straightforward monotone relations between a dimensional measure of student personality and indicators of educational value. In contrast to prevailing linear relations among cognitive measures, relations for affective and conative measures may be curvilinear; some theories even predict this. Further complicating the picture, other student characteristics may also moderate the relationships. And personality-achievement relations will likely also depend on subject matter, grade level, instructional conditions and contexts, teachers, and many other factors. (p. 246)

In summary, it seems that there are both theoretical and practical needs that dialectic dialogue can address across diverse areas of 21st-century education.

Dialoguing to Extend Time-Honored Traditions

In addition to moving into the future in alignment with current needs and trends, dialectic dialogue extends time-honored educational principles. Dialectic dialogue as an instructional tool has evolved from a particular combination of educational psychology and philosophy orientations.

Psychologically, dialectic dialogue deals with the structure and function of the learning process. Its oldest roots are in gestalt perceptual psychology (Kohler, 1947/1975), the problem-solving research that taught us to value the following:

- The whole is different from the sum of its parts. Early gestaltists demonstrated that the simple act of seeing was in fact quite subjective; recall the face-vase, old woman-young woman optical illusions commonplace in undergraduate psychology texts. The legacy lives as we acknowledge individual differences, particularly the possibility that nearly any academic task might provoke anxiety for someone.

- Needs that organize the perceptual field into foreground and background (Lewin, 1951). Our legacy from Kurt Lewin, father of group process, is the implication that a student's concentration and interruptions are based in competing needs and are not due to laziness or lack of motivation.
- Insight, the sudden solution to a problem (Kohler, 1947/1975, p. 320). Popularized by the Ford Motor Company "light bulb" and expressions such as "Eureka!" and "Aha!" insight describes the moment when the student attains awareness of the concentration-interruption pattern and sees a choice for how to recover.

In addition to the academic gestaltists, dialectic dialogue is rooted in the clinical gestalt theory that itself grew from the earlier gestalt academic work to evolve its own principles for the growth of individuals (Perls, Hefferline, & Goodman, 1951) and groups (Lewin, 1951). The gestaltists emphasized the importance of using "here and now" experiments to raise awareness of the "what and how" of experience, the structure and function. We used these principles to write our autobiographies and vignettes in present tense, code them with C-I-R and analyze them using the dialectic. Most important, gestaltists emphasize the "I-Thou" empathetic relationship drawn from Martin Buber (1923/1970), the existential philosopher.

A second tradition is the hierarchy of needs developed by Abraham Maslow (1962). We analyzed our vignettes to find three kinds of issues: intrapersonal, interpersonal, and skill. These categories align with Maslow's concepts of safety, belonging, and intellectual achievement needs.

Another major root of dialectic dialogue is existential philosophy, often summarized as "existence precedes essence" (Morris, 1966, p. 101). This means that the choices we make during learning (existence) reveal to us who we are as students (our essence). Alternatively, process (existence) precedes product or outcomes (essence). Bearing in mind that part of our process is unaware, dialogue with an observant teacher can raise awareness of the process that gives rise to the outcomes that we find unsatisfying. When we are aware of process, we can make different choices and attain different and more satisfying outcomes. Thus, we become aware of our process and can take responsible action to change it and learn more. Awareness, choice, and responsibility are the main tenets of existentialism.

Forming Your Own Explanation

Now that I've explained how I developed dialectic dialogue, I want to relate how others have experienced it. Readers of my drafts have brought their own trusted theories to interpret my ideas of dialectic dialogue for academic anxiety. These might help you be aware of what you draw on from your own theoretical background to understand the concepts we've discussed.

- The dialectic process was seen by many graduate students as an example of constructivism (Brooks & Brooks, 1993) in which students construct their own meaning for inherently ambiguous academic material.
- A teacher education student saw all the vignettes taken together as an example of the gestalt-oriented program in *Creativity from the Inside Out* (Marks-Tarlow, 1996). Indeed, formulating one's own recovery is a creative process!
- In the seventh-grade vignette, when I could solve one type of conversion word problem but couldn't generalize, a colleague pointed to that as an instance of situated knowledge. (Bernardo, 1994)
- In the first-day-of-seventh-grade vignette, Mr. Schoen's "talk us through the problem" technique was seen as "scaffolding" (Bruner, 1986) because he was asking Lucinda and Sandy to do the parts of the problem that were in their zones of proximal development (Dixon-Krauss, 1996, p. 19) and he did parts of the task that were just beyond their grasp. It was also seen as social modeling (Bandura, 1986).
- The sixth-grade vignette reminded a fellow gestaltist of Petruska Clarkson's book, *The Achilles Syndrome: Overcoming the Secret Fear of Failure* (1994), in which she describes the "pseudo-

competency" of people who are advancing professionally despite their underlying self-doubts that they cover up and hide.

- A fellow professor was reminded of a fairly classic study in the secondary reading literature (Johnston, 1985) that reported the vacillation between on-task involvement and ego defenses in three reading-disabled men.
- A colleague was reminded of TA (transactional analysis) by the reference to failing to maintain psychological safety. He reminded me that TA practitioners use the term *payoffs* (Steiner, 1974, p. 44) to describe self-defeating choices such as choosing not to learn. They assert that such a choice maintains one's existential belief as being "not OK," confirmed in the knowledge that he or she really understands him- or herself in a way that no teacher ever could.
- A theater-going friend recalled Shakespeare's "The lady doth protest too much, methinks" (Hamlet, Act 3, scene 2, line 242) as a description of the dialectic. The hopelessness that students often express as part of their anxiety implies the hopefulness that is unaware but obvious to someone perceiving them dialectically. Just the fact that they are complaining indicates caring about the situation. Someone shouting, "I don't care!" reveals so much physiological energy expressed as to make the content of the sentence doubtful from a dialectic point of view. Rather, it implies an equal amount of energy bounded in the polarity that is out of awareness. Why else would so much effort go into protesting? It really matters!

3

EVERYDAY INTERVENTIONS

In the previous chapters, we saw my personal struggle with math anxiety. In this chapter, we'll see anxiety interventions across the grades, disciplines, and settings. We'll use the inverted triangle as a tool to analyze the dialogue so we can get a feel for how parts fit within the whole.

Classroom Encounters

Anxiety is part of everyday life in every classroom. We have seen how anxiety issues—skill, interpersonal, and intrapersonal—affect every phase of a lesson. In the vignettes that follow we will see anxiety issues in a variety of academic situations across the grades. These are intended to broaden our concept of academic anxiety and to demonstrate how teachers use dialectic dialogue to help students identify, and perhaps move to resolve, their anxiety issues.

These vignettes are all from classrooms in the Greater Los Angeles vicinity. They were collected by my students from the Graduate School of Education and Psychology at Pepperdine University during the early and mid-1990s.

A Kindergartner Balks at Taking Turns

Learning how to take a turn is a social skill taught in kindergarten. The experience involves choosing an activity, waiting for one's turn, taking one's turn, and letting the next person have his or her turn. Ending her turn was such a struggle for the child in this vignette that it interrupted her satisfaction throughout her turn.

* * *

Susie will not relinquish the tricycle after her 5-minute turn, even though she has told her teacher every day that she really does want to let others take their turns. The teacher recognizes that the child is torn between wanting to follow the rule and wanting to ride the bicycle as long as she can.

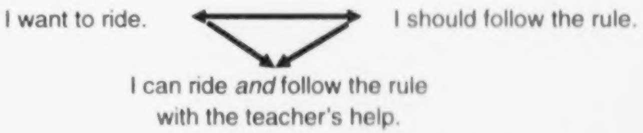
The next day, at the end of the child's turn, the child is riding the tricycle around the oval track painted on the blacktop in the kindergarten area and glancing repeatedly at the teacher. This is evidence of the internal conflict—she's torn between completely enjoying riding the tricycle and completely paying attention to the teacher.

When the child's turn is over, the teacher walks slowly toward her. The teacher's head is tilted slightly to the side as she remarks, "I know how hard it is for you to stop riding the tricycle because you love it so much. I know you want to follow the rule and give someone else a turn." The teacher bends slightly to lift the child who raises her arms to her. The child looks sad.

The teacher lifts the child off the tricycle and sets her on the ground. The child hugs the teacher around the knees, burying her face in the teacher's skirt, and the teacher pats the child's head for a long moment. When she looks up at the teacher, she has a big smile and then goes off to play in the sandbox.

* * *

The analysis of this kindergarten example can be depicted as an inverted triangle showing the struggle between thesis and antithesis that is resolved into a synthesis:

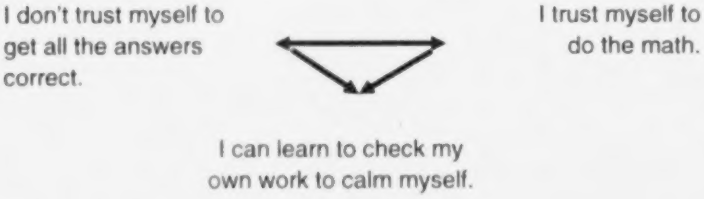

I want to ride.
I should follow the rule.
I can ride *and* follow the rule with the teacher's help.

A First Grader Cries During Math

A first grader cries during math every day, even though he completes his work. He does not say why but nods "yes" through his tears when his teacher asks if it's because he worries about getting some of his answers wrong. This cues the teacher that the child is anxious and probably is torn between staying in the present moment and reworking the problems to see if the answers are correct, and jumping ahead to the future where he might find out that some answers are not wrong. The fear of the unknown, perhaps coming from a deeper doubt—that he doesn't trust his ability to learn—results in the tears.

The teacher points out to the student that most of his math problems are done correctly. She shows him how to cover his answers and go over his addition to see if he gets the same answer again so he doesn't have to fear her telling him that the answer is wrong. She also intuits that he could have a deeper fear of her. He has very protective parents and has not had a non-family authority figure in his life. There is a deeper need to please the authority figure, she senses, and added to that is an ethnic and gender difference between herself and her student. These issues likely bring about his math anxiety, manifested as an inability to tolerate any possibility of imperfection in his work.

The teacher analyzes the student's response as an issue of self-confidence:


I don't trust myself to get all the answers correct.
I trust myself to do the math.
I can learn to check my own work to calm myself.

* * *

It's amazing that this student was able to complete the math problems while being repeatedly interrupted by his strong emotions. The teacher will facilitate the awareness of this child with the suggestions that he check each problem as he goes along and learn to notice his level of confidence after completing each problem and again after checking each problem.

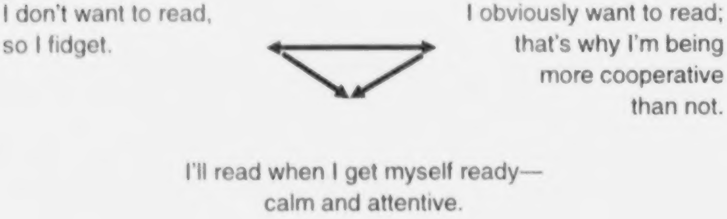
A Second Grader Struggles to Settle Down

Janie, a second grader, has trouble sitting still to read; she jiggles and pulls at her clothes, including her hair ribbons, socks, and shoes. The teacher believes that even though Janie seems unaware of the jiggling, this restlessness may interfere with her concentration. She believes that it reflects some reluctance to read so that the normal energy that Janie would bring to the reading process is converted from excitement to anxiety.

As an experiment, the teacher has Janie "shake out" her tension before reading. Janie shakes each arm, each leg, and her torso. Then she sits down, does some focused breathing, opens the book, and reads the affirmation on her bookmark, "My body is still so my mind can travel."

* * *

The dialectic dialogue for Janie is intended to be repeated throughout successive phases of the lesson, otherwise Janie's concentration is interrupted by restlessness again. Janie will be observed by the school psychologist and perhaps recommended for psychological assessment for hyperactivity. Nevertheless, Janie can use her awareness to control whatever aspect of the situation she chooses.



I don't want to read, so I fidget.

I obviously want to read; that's why I'm being more cooperative than not.

I'll read when I get myself ready—calm and attentive.

A Third Grader Stops Reading Nonsense

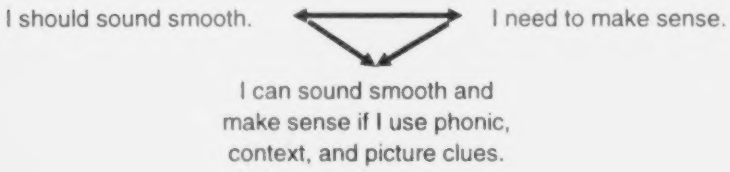
Jackie, a third grader, was a new student at her school. She quickly made friends with two other third-grade girls. When the teacher administered an informal reading assessment, Jackie read nonsense without correcting it. The assessment story was about Bob, age 7, who was home from school because of illness. He was looking out of the front window of his house and saw smoke from the neighbor's house, followed by the arrival of firefighters who put out the fire. Jackie read it quickly, word by word, reading nonsense for several non-key words. She retold it as a story about Bob and firefighters pulling "horses" off the back of the fire truck. When probed for more information on this detail, she became defensive and insistent that there were horses on the truck along with the hoses. When she was directed to point to the words *hoses* and *horses*, she admitted that she had misread *hose*. The teacher suggested that it seemed that she hated to be wrong and Jackie confirmed it. She elaborated to say that she felt wrong a lot of the time.

* * *

On the basis of Jackie's reading of this story, the teacher probed her thinking to find out how she decided that she should just read nonsense words for words she didn't know. Jackie explained to the teacher that when you read aloud, it's important to keep going and make it sound smooth. Jackie said she heard how smoothly her friends read when they were in the reading group with the teacher, and when they didn't read smoothly, the teacher asked them to reread.

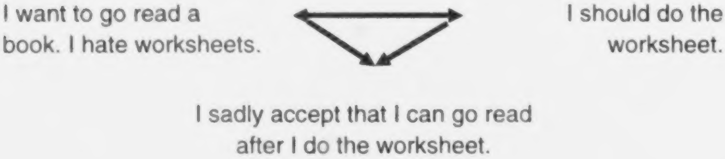
The teacher saw Jackie's point of view as an issue of anxiety. She speculated that at the moment when Jackie realized that she didn't know the pronunciation of a word, she flashed on an image of her friends reading smoothly, and that image pulled her off-task. A second issue emerged in the reading: wanting to sound as fluent as her friends. Jackie chose this route instead of staying with the word and using context, phonic, or picture clues to guess what it might be. The teacher assured Jackie that her friends were not reading nonsense words to sound fluent, they are using context clues. The teacher told Jackie that when one doesn't know a word, one must try to make sense rather than sound fluent. She told Jackie to predict what words would come next in a story and to ask for help if she couldn't think of a word.

Here is how the teacher interpreted Jackie's issue:


I should sound smooth.
I need to make sense.
I can sound smooth and make sense if I use phonic, context, and picture clues.

A Fourth Grader Lies About Being Finished With His Worksheets

Juan, a fourth grader, continually gets in trouble for leaving his seat when he is supposed to do his math worksheet. He lies and says that he's finished with the work. When confronted with his unfinished work, he looks sad and sits in his seat and stares at the unfinished paper. Slowly, he does the worksheet and then goes to the library center. He seems sadly resolved. His teacher is sad to have to force him to conform but is sadly resolved that he must do so.



I want to go read a book. I hate worksheets.

I should do the worksheet.

I sadly accept that I can go read after I do the worksheet.

A Fifth Grader Asks for Teacher Mediation

A fifth grader—a new student—says that he doesn't want to be on a team with certain other kids during P.E. because they have been making fun of his English. The teacher clarifies the situation, restating it as a dilemma. "So you're telling me this because you're upset and would like to be in P.E., but it's hard for you because the other kids might tease you?" She is touched by his circumstances, and volunteers her own comment. "I appreciate you telling me this. What do you think that will solve?"

"I need a break."

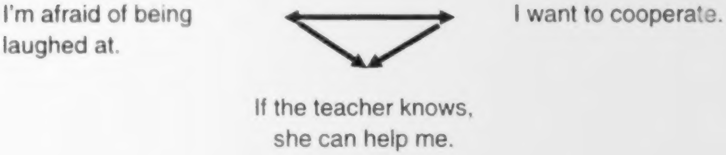
"OK, let me get you on another team. But I'm not totally in agreement with avoiding the problem, so when we rotate teams you'll be with those kids sooner or later, and we'll have to deal with it then. I hope by then you'll have resolved some of it. I will mediate the conflict from then on. Fair enough?"

"OK."

* * *

This student's concentration is short-circuited before class even begins. Although the teacher agrees that the student needs a break, she is aware that the long-range solution is the conflict resolution program that the students are learning schoolwide.

The teacher will need to alert the counselor so that the counselor can make a coordinated effort to help this student through a difficult transition period.


I'm afraid of being laughed at.
I want to cooperate.
If the teacher knows, she can help me.

A Sixth Grader Struggles to Accept His Freehand Drawing Ability

After a science lesson on the parts of a cell, the class is asked to draw and label the parts of a cell. As the teacher walks around monitoring the work, she notes one boy huffing and puffing loudly, tightening his lips, and crumpling up his cell drawing and starting a new one, getting just a circle on the fresh paper before crumpling that one up too and starting yet another. The teacher would like to make a comment about wasting paper but she decides that such a statement is her own concern and would only raise an additional issue for him to deal with, exacerbating his frustration. She decides to intervene with a more open-ended comment that takes account of the fact that he *is* making repeated attempts to be on-task.

"Looks like you're struggling with your artistic abilities. Is that so?"

The student looks up at her, his face a mixture of frustration and relief that she noticed. He nods in agreement.

"One thing you can do is use something round to trace around it. Another thing you can do is accept that you can't draw a perfect circle freehand and then just move on to the labeling." She pauses. "What will you choose?"

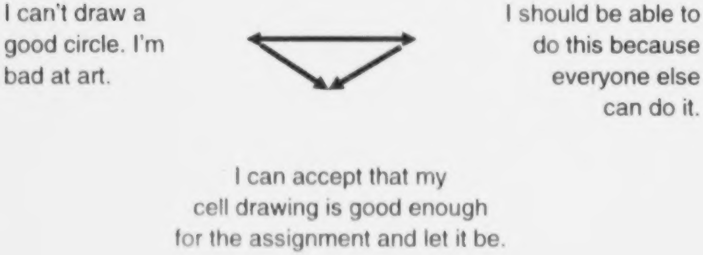
"I'll just do it," he answers curtly and begins labeling the current version in front of him.

"Wait, Jorge," the teacher says. "How did you decide? I'm curious."

"It's more better to get it done."

"Hmm . . ." she says, "so you picked your priority in terms of what you are responsible for producing. Interesting. . . ."

She moves away and he continues labeling.



I can't draw a good circle. I'm bad at art.

I should be able to do this because everyone else can do it.

I can accept that my cell drawing is good enough for the assignment and let it be.

A Ninth Grader Despairs of Writing a Perfect Thesis Statement

Justin is a happy-go-lucky "pest" to his classmates but likable to the English teacher. The class has just gone over a handout that includes a sample thesis statement, a paragraph of analysis, and a conclusion. The teacher is circulating as students write a thesis statement. Justin has crossed out several attempts and is staring at the paper.

"This is hopeless," Justin moans. "I'll never be able to write one like yours."

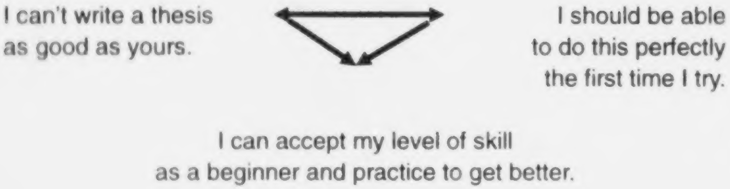
"You're right," says the teacher, exaggerating his fear as a strategy to elicit the polarity. "How could you possibly want to write anything less than mine? You should be furious with yourself for not being able to write the perfect thesis in five minutes!"

Justin breathes a sigh of relief and the teacher adds, "You're being hard on yourself, huh?"

"I guess so. Mine doesn't have to sound like yours, does it?"

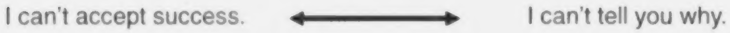
"I hope it doesn't. I can hear my voice any old day. I'm interested in hearing what you have to say."

With that, Justin resumes writing.


I can't write a thesis as good as yours.
I should be able to do this perfectly the first time I try.
I can accept my level of skill as a beginner and practice to get better.

A Tenth Grader Self-Defeats With English Homework

The tenth-grade English class is making newsletters, and Maria is in charge of the banner and clip art for the front page. She shows her teacher a rough draft of the banner on Monday and he tells her it looks fine. On Tuesday, when it is due and the class is pasting up the newsletter, Maria doesn't have the banner and won't explain what happened. The diagram below reflects Maria's experience:


I can't accept success.
I can't tell you why.

Sometimes our attempts to initiate dialogue and get to the bottom of matters is thwarted. In this case, the teacher decided that it was beyond his control. That didn't make it any easier to watch Maria self-defeat. With regret, the teacher failed her on that part of the assignment and told her he hoped that she didn't use the "fail" as a self-fulfilling prophecy to prove to herself that she was a "loser."

When it came time to present the newsletter from her group, the lead presenter was absent and Maria stepped in and did a great job, given the circumstances. The teacher was greatly relieved to see her take leadership and gain some grade points to make up for the mysteriously missing banner and clip art.

A Senior Would Rather Drop Out Than Take Speech Class

Shawn sat in the back of his speech class. During the first week of class, the teacher discovered that Shawn was unable to speak if called on, blushing red but smiling to make light of it. In a conversation after class, Shawn revealed that he suffered from stage fright when it came to speaking in class and dreaded giving a speech. He was sure he'd fail this class, a graduation requirement, and was fighting with his mother to let him drop out.

The speech teacher suggested that Shawn notice his specific thoughts and images during the speech block. Shawn did so and discovered that he had overgeneralized his fear; it was only three or four "jocks" in the class whose criticism he feared, the same boys who taunted him outside of classes. The teacher led Shawn to be aware that he had coping strategies that he could use in the classroom even though he was just imagining the taunting there.

With the help of ongoing conversations with the teacher and permission to deliver his speech in a small group sitting in a circle, Shawn was able to learn speech concepts and pass the class.

I blush and smile.

I'm afraid.

I can deal with my imagined criticism
from the jocks in speech class just as
I deal with it outside class.

Generalizing From School Encounters

School is a place in which students are asked to grow in skill, in interpersonal relations, and in intrapersonal knowledge. Everyday examples show the wide range of struggles and show how teachers are constantly called on to intervene. From such examples we see the universal nature of academic anxiety and accept struggle as a part of the learning process. Using dialectic dialogue as a tool for intervention, we can better facilitate learning across grades and subjects.

Getting Help Outside the School Setting

In some circumstances, when a student needs more intervention than is available in the classroom, a referral is made to a clinic or an educational therapist in private practice. Here are two excerpts from educational therapy sessions:

A First Grader Recovers From Exact Word Reading

Kamaljeet Singh, age 6, comes to educational therapy sessions with me because his mother reports that he sounds out every word but can't tell what he's reading. He is repeating kindergarten. I ask him who is the fastest runner in his class and he tells me. I ask for the best singer, the most friendly, and so forth. When I ask who is the best reader, he says completely articulately, "Well, I'd have to say that I am because I'm repeating kindergarten, you know, so I have more experience."

I ask him to read a short selection. He labors to pronounce every word correctly. It is painful to listen to. I imagine that if I was reading, I would feel anger and resentment about having such a hard time. I use this as a clinical hypothesis to be verified by Kamaljeet.

At the end of the first line, he asks, "If I don't pass kindergarten this time, do I go back to preschool?" I assure him that he can't back out of the system; he might just go to a special education class. I ask him if that thought bothered him while he was reading the first line and he said yes. I reason that he had that thought because he was afraid of failing, but the laboriousness of the task had also made him angry.

I ask him if he wants to experiment and he agrees. I give him a pencil and ask him to blacken out each word as he reads it aloud and tell what he thinks of it. He does so, saying, "I hate you, word. You give me trouble. You make me feel like I'm my little brother." When he finishes, I verify with him that he had anger stored up toward reading and being retained in kindergarten. He agrees.

"Where do you feel the anger?" I ask.

"Here in my gut," he replies.

"And how does it feel to talk to the words and get some of your anger out?" I ask.

"Feels good," he says in a deep, growly voice, holding the pencil up and pointing it at me!

"And you're angry at me, too?"

"Not really," he says, quite deadpan, looking me directly in the eye.

"Well, I wonder if you resent having to come to tutoring."

"No, it's OK. It's mostly the reading."

"So maybe you'd like to spend time with me but not reading."

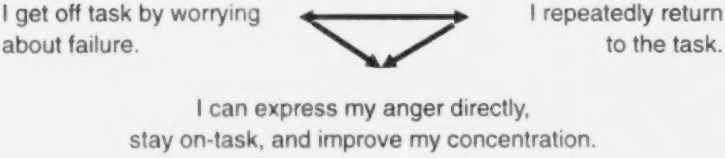
"Uh-huh," he agrees, raising his tone of voice, his face becoming lighter.

* * *

I believe that this experiment helped him clarify and more fully experience the antithesis of which he had been unaware. My hypothesis was verified: If he could discover his fear and anger and bring it to light, he could acknowledge it instead of vacillating away from it as he had been doing. Once expressed, it gave him some relief and satisfaction to have brought out the truth. He could be done with the matter; it would be resolved. Then he could turn his efforts to the reading.

After that experiment, he learned to read folksong lyrics using the Language Experience Approach (Stauffer, 1970). This is an approach in which students dictate a short passage to the teacher who then uses it as the reading material from which sight words and phonic skills are developed. In three months, Kamaljeet Singh was reading all the Bill Martin (1970) "Instant Readers," such as *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* a genre for beginning readers in which the plots are predictable and the language is characterized by repetition, rhythm, and rhyme. He began doing much better in school.

The following is a summary of Kamaljeet Singh's main issue.



I get off task by worrying about failure.

I repeatedly return to the task.

I can express my anger directly, stay on-task, and improve my concentration.

A Second Grader Self-Refers for Help With Reading Hard Words

Mitchell, age 7, an articulate second grader with a speech impediment, referred himself to the Education and Psychology Clinic at Pepperdine University because he thought he was the worst reader in the class. He was assigned to Laura, a Psy.D. student who tutored him in reading by dealing with the issues—skill, interpersonal, and intrapersonal—as they arose.

At their first session, they discussed what Mitchell wanted from the tutoring. Laura asked what he thought he needed help with. Mitchell explained that in his class they were reading easy books and hard books. The hard books had hard words in them and he wanted to be able to read them. In his words, he "worried" about the words as he read them and worrying interrupted his concentration.

Laura asked him to experiment by reading a paragraph with a hard word in it and telling her what happened. He did so and said that he "worried" about the hard word.

Laura then repeated what he'd initially said in order to make a contract with him. "So you want to read books that have hard words without having to worry about them, is that right?"

Mitchell concurred. Laura said in an energetic, encouraging voice, "Well, I think you *will* be able to read those books!" Noting that Mitchell was hesitating, she added, "What do you think?"

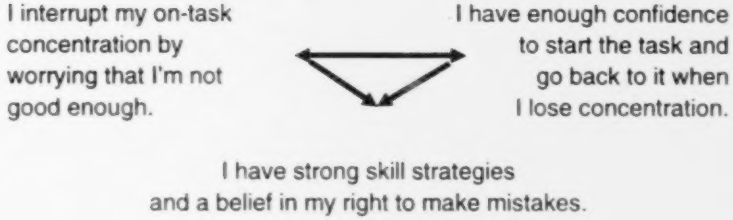
"Maybe . . ." Mitchell said uncertainly, letting her know that he wasn't as certain as she was.

* * *

After several sessions, the general word *worry* was clarified: He was worried about being laughed at by his classmates for not knowing the words. He worked at telling his classmates in fantasy how they hurt his feelings. When the hurt was expressed, it aroused anger toward them for hurting him. He told them that even if they thought he was retarded, it didn't make it true. This seemed to resolve the social issue for him.

In weekly sessions over a four-month period, he read and retold stories, learning strategies such as using context clues to guess unknown words and deciding when to skip words. These strategies built his cognitive strategies so that fewer skill issues emerged in the tutoring sessions. He continued to be firm in his belief that he had the right to make mistakes without being laughed at. He decided on his own when he was ready to quit the tutoring.

In Mitchell's case, we can see how the skill issue of not being able to use context clues interrupts his concentration and also gives rise to the emergence of the interpersonal issue of worrying about what others think of his performance. His dialectic shows the two issues as he perceives them:



I interrupt my on-task concentration by worrying that I'm not good enough.

I have enough confidence to start the task and go back to it when I lose concentration.

I have strong skill strategies and a belief in my right to make mistakes.

Educational Therapy Helps With Personality Development

Although this book is aimed at anxiety issues experienced by K-12 students, it is important to note that academic anxiety can be a major issue in adult life. Following are summaries of work with adults. Sometimes the issues have been unresolved from very young ages.

"I Won't Risk Growing Up"

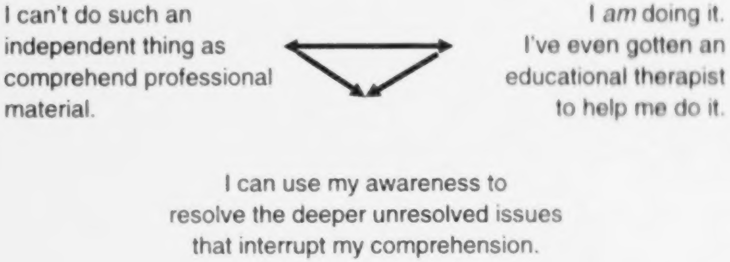
Lil, age 26, yawns repeatedly and falls asleep when studying her graduate school homework, although she reads novels for pleasure every evening. She consults an educational therapist who asks her to read the problematic material aloud and report her thoughts, feelings, images, or body sensations as she reads. She begins reading aloud and, after one paragraph, she begins yawning. The educational therapist asks her to give the yawn a voice so that she can discover its meaning to her. The yawn now says that it keeps her from understanding the material.

"Why?" she asks the yawn.

"If you understand, you'll be smart, if you're smart, you'll be independent, if you're independent, you'll be alone. No more 'Daddy's Little Girl.' "

* * *

What was revealed was that Lil's relationship with her father was keeping her intellectually stifled as well as emotionally bound. In successive sessions, Lil dialogued between the intellectual and emotional aspects of herself, thesis and antithesis. She worked with her inner Daddy's Little Girl to realize that she would still be loved and still belong to the family even if she progressed as an adult. She was able to compromise, allowing herself to continue to learn and grow as a professional. She knew the issues were being resolved when her yawning abated and her concentration, recall, and enjoyment of professional material increased.



I can't do such an independent thing as comprehend professional material.

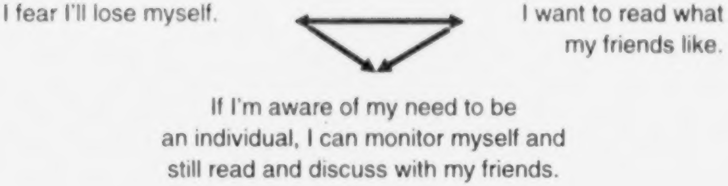
I *am* doing it. I've even gotten an educational therapist to help me do it.

I can use my awareness to resolve the deeper unresolved issues that interrupt my comprehension.

"I Gotta Be Me"

Charles, age 35, can't get started with his pleasure reading of novels that he has bought on the recommendation of his friends. He has just stacked them next to his bed. Strangely, it seems to him, he does all the reading required for his dual professions as a psychotherapist and cabinet maker. But at the moment when he thinks that he should get to reading his pleasure books, he thinks of something else that he should do.

Charles knows he is avoiding the books but he can't understand why. When he consults an educational therapist about the problem, he is asked to discover what the stack of books means to him by imagining that it is present and giving it a voice. He does so and the stack tells him that, if he reads those books, he will be like everybody else, like the people who recommended the books. He then understands that he is avoiding reading the books because they threaten the loss of his individuality. At this point, he is able to speak back to the stack and thank it for warning him that his individuality is at risk when he reads. He decides that now he will be able to read the books because he has resolved the irrational fear that was making him anxious.



I fear I'll lose myself.

I want to read what my friends like.

If I'm aware of my need to be
an individual, I can monitor myself and
still read and discuss with my friends.

Sometimes career choices are made to avoid areas of academic anxiety. Hackett and Betz (1992) have pointed out that college students make career-related choices based on their intrapersonal self-efficacy beliefs. Chan (1981) has reported that Asian American students have chosen college majors in the technical sciences rather than humanities on the basis of their issues with English. Chan's research is somewhat similar to the case of Zeb, a Vietnamese immigrant, age 17.

"I'll Suffer Along"

Zeb was ashamed of his "bad" English. He loved science and was very good at math. He worked with his guidance counselor to select high school classes that minimized the need to speak. He chose math instead of science because he thought he'd have to speak less in math. He was correct; the advanced math classes consisted of the teacher and students writing out the solutions to their problems—communicating by writing numerical statements. Although Zeb was successful in his math classes, he was plagued by his love for science. He was tempted to attend the 7 a.m. microbiology course, but it was filled mainly by Asian Americans, and he felt as if he wasn't yet an American. He used this thought repeatedly to stop himself from attending. But his homework sessions in math were punctuated by his dilemma of feeling safe and competent in the math class and longing for science. Over time, as he became more convertible in the United States, he changed his attitude toward the decision he had made. He grew to resent his decision to "take the easy way," he saw himself as an impostor, and he dismissed his math teacher's praise for his math skills. He attended several educational therapy sessions to talk about the problem but he took no action to improve his English or attend the microbiology class. He remained a dissatisfied math student in graduate school.

I really would rather study science. It haunts me.

↔

I should stay in math. I can get by with my English.

No resolution of issue.

Experiment—Make an Academic Anxiety Survey!

Discover how your everyday encounters put you in contact with situations similar to those in this chapter. Survey some of your relatives, friends, colleagues, or students about their academic anxiety issues. You may find that you know people whose life direction has been determined by academic anxiety. Perhaps you will find that they sought professional help from an educational therapist or that they didn't know such help was available.

4

PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION IN A WHOLE-GROUP LESSON

In previous chapters, we have learned how to intervene when anxiety emerges. In this chapter, we will learn how to coordinate prevention and intervention strategies. We will see how a teacher uses a prevention strategy at each phase of a lesson. Our viewpoints will be those of the teacher and of a university professor as they work in collaboration.

Collaboration for Support

The Teacher

Lynn Noonan teaches sixth grade at Parkside Elementary School, a K-8 school on the northeast side of Los Angeles. She is well respected as a faculty member. Lynn's teaching is student centered. Her instructional units begin with some teacher-directed instruction and gradually shift to student-centered instruction as the students take more time to work in groups to teach each other and to prepare to teach the entire class. The students are serious about their work and the climate is supportive and productive.

As a higher education partner in the technology project at Lynn's school, I immediately appreciated her skillful blend of management and instruction in the flow of her dialogue with her students. Lynn mainly uses open-ended questions, which make the students' backgrounds and cognitive processes apparent. "What could you do about that? What else? What's your choice?" illustrate her stance. She is extraordinarily vigilant about shifting the power of choice to the students, and the students are usually responsible in taking and exercising their choices. Her strategies seem to promote responsibility and prevent anxiety.

The Participant-Observer

I had completed a postdoctoral program at the Gestalt Therapy Institute of Los Angeles where I developed applications of gestalt principles to academic anxiety. Subsequently, I integrated those findings into the reading tutoring program at Pepperdine University's Graduate School of Education and Psychology. I had worked on academic anxiety with individuals and small pull-out groups (Craft, 1989; Garcia, 1988). I had been trying to extend the work of earlier gestalt educators who had written curricula and activities to make education "confluent," integrating cognitive and affective objectives (Brown, 1971; Castillo, 1978; Galyean, n.d.). I wanted to address anxiety issues as they emerge spontaneously in the ongoing flow of a regular classroom. My next step was to put my ideas in common, nontechnical language—showing how to express a dialectic, clarify, resolve, and so forth, for younger students in classroom situations.

The Partnership

Lynn and I agreed to collaborate on the development of prevention and intervention strategies for academic anxiety. She said that the strategies that I had seen as prevention reflected her sensitivity to general signs of anxiety about math, writing, public speaking, and grades. Her assessment was that students were engaged during direct instruction but somewhat less during small group sessions. But she was most curious to know more about anxiety that might be functioning during learning-center time when students were working independently and she was off-limits helping Limited English Proficient

(LEP), RSP, and low readers at her table. The work of five or six students would consistently not be forthcoming. These students would give accounts that puzzled her. The students were often puzzled too. They seemed to lack the awareness of how it came to be that their assignments were lost, incomplete, or "off the mark."

Lynn thought that working with me might shed some light on these confused and vague situations. She felt anxious interacting with the parents of these students without a clear description of what was happening and clear advice on how they could help.

She suspected poor organizational skills accounted for some of the missing work. She had begun teaching organizational skills explicitly by increasing the amount of class time used to have various students explain in detail how they were planning to do assignments and get them in on time.

She also suspected lack of responsibility once students were on their own. Some students had trouble "structuring for themselves," she thought, so once they were on their own, they "fell apart." I mentioned that Gestalt psychology was aimed at increasing awareness on a moment-by-moment basis so they learn how they learn and could recover from interruptions. She thought it might help.

I took notes of her descriptions and later organized them according to the type of academic anxiety issue that might be involved. This gave my observations a direction: To confirm or disconfirm my supposition of issues (see Table 4.1).

We decided to try journaling as a way that Lynn could carry on separate multiple conversations that students, in turn, could use to increase awareness of their own learning processes. We recalled the original "dialogue journals" (Staton, 1980; Staton, Shuy, Peyton, & Reed, 1988) that have proliferated and mutated and been so instrumental in helping teachers learn of their students' struggles. Our journal would focus on struggles during academic tasks.

We decided that I'd attend a lesson near the beginning of a unit so that I could get a sense of what Lynn was doing to increase awareness. We reviewed her Unit Assignment Sheet together (Table 4.2).

Next, I'd study the small groups, and finally I'd study the independent work during center time. At first I'd observe, take handwritten notes, and interview the students she was concerned about (see Table 4.3). Later I'd bring in a camcorder to collect data in a more thorough way. She'd make sure all students in the class had videotap-

Table 4.1 Target Students

Type of Issue →	*Skill*	*Interpersonal*	*Intrapersonal*
Louis moves all over	Skill needs, oldest boy in big family, parents don't structure	Bossy, for example, telling how to quit HyperStudio	Identifies self as "good friend" and "good sport"
Greg taunted for shortness	Capable, youngest child, only boy in big intact family, mixed literacy	Follows Louis around to talk about wrestling; can help Louis	Unknown
Tim taunted for taking Ritalin, RSP	Capable, youngest child, supportive parents	RSP during group time, teased about meds, one friend in class across hall	Thinks he's slow
Christopher absent, stares, talks about (late night) TV & Ms. Noonan	Capable, one sister, lives with grandmother, mother works nights	Leslie only friend, taunted for overweight	Unknown
Leslie	Capable with help	Friend to Chris, wants the more popular girls as friends	Links self-concept to what others think of her

ing permission slips on file. I would have permission to ask a student aside to look at himself or herself on tape to stimulate recall of his or her experience at that moment (Conners, 1978).

Classroom Arrangement and Management

It is a truism that a classroom is a world unto itself. It is certainly true of Lynn Noonan's classroom. She uses the physical space itself to address multiple needs—her own and those of the students.

Table 4.2 Unit Assignment

At the end of this unit on ancient China, you will be able to tell what a meritocracy is, how it compares and contrasts with a democracy, and how it influenced society in the Tong and Song dynasties.

To exhibit your knowledge of ancient China your group should plan a report, a skit (costumes, music, dances are possible), build some 3D models of things from that time.

You will learn from your classmates about ancient China. Each group will teach the whole class the information that they gathered about one subtopic of ancient China.

Specific subtopics that groups can choose from are

Education
Law
Business in the country
Trade with other countries
Religion
Social groups/classes
Fine arts
Performing arts
Government
Economy
Enemies/Allies/War/Peace
Geography

Classroom structure and climate are powerful aids for teacher and students, especially at the beginning of a unit of instruction: the teacher uses the room to communicate, and the students use the room to keep themselves oriented. The room can be "read" to show where to find assignments, due dates, where to turn in work, as well as for group membership, roles, and process. There are reminders about the many and various "tear-offs" that are due, bulletin boards that summarize recent units of study, and centers with books, tapes, and

Table 4.3 Researcher's Notebook Excerpt

Activity	*L*	*T*	*C*
8:30 Intro	Fiddling with sharpener	On-task	Staring out window
8:45 Brainstorm	8:35 Looking at me, then on-task	On-task	Looking down
8:50 Read	On-task	Same	Same

players for use in current studies. Within the room, each student has his or her own desk, materials, and group. The desks are organized into 3 "tables" of 10. There is a plastic basket of shared scissors, markers, glue, and rulers in the middle of each "table."

At the front of the room is a learning center for the current unit. Below a large wall chart, "Millenniums at a Glance: A History of China" (Leung, 1996), is a shelf of worn history books (probably discontinued editions), trade books, and magazines. There is a videotape of *The Last Emperor* (Bertolucci, 1987) along with a photocopied blowup of the picture on the videocase cover. A printout of a World Wide Web address (Frankenstein, 1997) is taped above the shelf, and a second address (Cyberway, 1995) has been added in sixth-grade writing to show the evolving nature of the material.

Classroom arrangement and management can prevent the likelihood of anxiety by meeting some of the needs of psychological safety and a sense of belonging. Students are more likely to be able to concentrate on skills and ideas when they know the structure and the function of their environment.

Setting Expectations

Lynn introduced me to the whole class, and I described myself as a social scientist who studies how teachers and students learn in their classroom habitats. I said that I wanted to study them because I thought they were a productive class and would be open to trying out my idea of how to increase productivity. They listened well, responding with nods and little smiles. They put their nametags on their desks for me to see. The only question was, would I be going to the mountains like the scientists they met at science camp? "No," I said, "those are natural scientists; I am a social scientist who studies the classroom habitat." That was accepted with affirmative nods. I began my observation notes.

To introduce the concept of concentration and interruption, we watched a tape of the previous evening's baseball news. Although most players were shown concentrating intently, an outfielder looked away and missed a catch, so we also had an example of interruption. The students discussed why he might have looked away and Lynn had a chance to point out how puzzling it is when you see a fumble and don't know why. She stressed that this happens when teachers watch students learn, too. The students understood and together we all wondered if the outfielder would know what interrupted his concentration. It was also obvious to us that the fielder didn't have time to recover from the interruption before the ball hit the ground!

We thought the coach would be yelling at the fielder later and that the fielder would be racking his brain to remember how he had been interrupted. That gave us a chance to talk about the kind of feedback that would be helpful; feedback that would help the fielder do better the next time. Watching the videoclip of his interruption would be better for the fielder than being yelled at. That discussion also gave me a chance to introduce the idea that I would be videotaping. They were completely agreeable, used to taping from the technology project.

Then Lynn went over the handout "Concentration, Interruption, Recovery" (see Experiment! at the end of this chapter), elaborating on external and internal interruptions. They brainstormed the ideas of internal and external interruptions as well as recovery strategies that were part of their ongoing classroom life (e.g., if someone is bugging me, I can ask them to stop, and if they don't I can move away).

Journaling for Awareness

The students worked together as a whole group to brainstorm and write a sample journal entry for a common external interruption in their classroom: persons coming in from other classes to make announcements.

They also decided that Lynn would suggest journaling if she suspected that they were interrupted but were not aware. We seemed to understand that the ultimate goal was for them to recognize their own interruptions and develop their own strategies to recover. We all agreed that this might make them more productive (see Table 4.4).

Using Prevention Strategies Throughout the Lesson Cycle

To transition from the journaling to the whole-group lesson, Lynn asked the students to tuck the journaling sheet into their regular journal booklets.

Table 4.4 Open Mind Diagram

What interrupts my concentration?
Draw a head shape around the internal interruptions.

EXTERNAL INTERRUPTIONS:	Other people bug me	Teacher says stop
	People coming in room	Room too noisy
	Group can't agree	Phone rings
INTERNAL INTERRUPTIONS:	Home stuff Stuff from recess Don't get the work Want to move around Something good that happened Sleepy	

Attention

"OK," Lynn says, walking to the board and pointing (monitoring to see that all eyes are on her). "Time to learn. Let's get paper, pencil, and textbooks out. Look at me when you're ready." She pauses and scans the room for response. A flurry of activity produces the materials and in 20 seconds, all eyes are on her.

I notice that Lynn's strategy for getting everyone's attention is to explicitly call them to attention, and to wait quietly until she has their attention. She can scan the classroom for body language and eye contact that tells her they are getting on-task. If there was a student anxiously preoccupied with another issue, Lynn's attention strategy could fail to get that student's full attention. The student might orient toward Lynn but inwardly would be shuttling back and forth in the dialectical manner we've seen in previous chapters. Lynn scans the class for body language and eye contact, but she also uses intuition to sense the extent to which students are in contact with her. She might catch anxiety at this phase by spotting a vacant look.

Set Purpose

Satisfied with the level of attention, she continues, "We've got two big tasks today." She goes to the Agenda on the chalkboard and points to the first item. "Look here. First we'll learn about meritocracy and family life. Second, at the same time, we'll learn about what to do in small groups. We'll start a How a Meritocracy Affects Family Life report together to show you how to do it when you're in your groups. Third, after recess, you'll have some time for group work on how a meritocracy affected your report topic: arts, trade, religion, education, and so forth.

"But let's take a moment to each set our very own purpose for learning about family life. Each of us is an individual and we have different interests. Look at our KWL chart (Ogle, 1986). What we know, what we want to know, and later, what we've learned about Ancient China . . . what we know, what we want to know, what we've learned. See if you can find a family life type of 'want' from the list or make one up yourself." She pauses while they look at the chart (see Table 4.5).

"Are any of you willing to say what you think or what you picked?"

"I will," says Polly. "I want to know about Confucius and family life."

"Thanks, Polly. Did you think that up or pick it from the chart?"

"I thought of it," says Polly, "because I've heard people say, 'Confucius say . . . whatever.' I want to know about it."

"Thanks, Polly. Now remember that when we have a clear purpose in mind and we actively search for information about it, our minds don't wander and we retain more. In our new vocabulary, that means we don't have internal interruptions so much.

"Anybody else want to say their purpose?" She scans the class and waits. Silence. "Maybe inside you have a purpose but when you think of telling it, you're interrupted by something that says, 'Stop.' " Some students grin with recognition. "Usually that's fear of criticism underneath, interrupting you. Past put-downs cause fear today. Happens to all of us. The good part is that when we know about those old injuries, we can decide how we want to deal with them. We can choose to speak to a small group instead of a large group. If we ignore them, they might keep us from speaking at all. So, if you want to, deal with it right now by just telling your table partners."

Table 4.5 Ancient China KWL Chart

The Know-Want-Learn (KWL) chart (Ogle, 1986) for the ancient China unit was as follows:

What We Know
- Chinatown in Los Angeles (many)
- Chinese New Year (many)
- *The Last Emperor*—walled city—rich (many)
- Chinese food and chopsticks (many)
- martial arts like Bruce Lee (many)
- funerals in Chinatown where they put the picture of the person in the back of a truck with flowers (Kim, Walter)
- red and gold (Kim)
- a kind of silk comes from China (Leslie)
- bound feet of women (Andrea)
- put coins in Buddha fountain for good luck (many)
- some of our ancestors are Chinese (Walter, Kim, Polly)
- some of us are Chinese-American (Walter, Kim)
- My grandfather says, "Confucius say this or that." (Polly)

What We Want to Know
- Is meritocracy like merit badges in Boy Scouts? (Jose, Tim)
- Did they have fortune cookies?
- Did they have schools and books?
- Did they have big tombs like ancient Egypt?
- Does a dynasty have a king or queen?
- Did children drink tea?
- What did they wear?
- Did they have great jewelry?
- Did they worship Confucius?
- Did they have a lot of wars?
- Were there ninjas?
- Did they live long?
- Did they smoke dope?
- Was it like *Kung Fu*?

What We Learned

The room is instantly buzzing. "Aha! There's my writing prompt for tomorrow morning!" she says to me. "Write about a time you were put down and how it keeps you from speaking up today."

I pace the aisles, watching the target students as unobtrusively as possible. Christopher seems to be listening to his partner, Louis is talking, Leslie is listening, and Tim is talking. Conclusion: All seem to be on-task.

It seems that Lynn's prevention strategies are (a) to take time to make purpose-setting an explicit phase of the lesson, (b) to explain that purposes are personal, and (c) to call on a student to give an example of how it is done. When it seems that students are reluctant to speak up, she intervenes to help them identify, clarify, and resolve their anxiety by asking them to tell their table partners and then she checks the success of that strategy.

Purpose-setting is critical for the personal engagement of every student. The purpose must be a specific enough goal so the text information can be matched to it as the student reads the text, specific enough to learn how this lesson is different from the last, personal enough to engender some excitement. Purpose-setting sets the limits and priorities of what will be learned and it determines when the task is completed. It also has the quality of ownership because people identify with its purposes. To quote an old maxim, "If you don't know where you're going, any road will get you there."

Public statement of purpose is subject to a form of what is commonly called stage fright, technically, communication apprehension (Daly & McCroskey, 1984).

Lynn knows that awareness is crucial to purpose-setting and that without it, purposive learning is imperiled and rote learning is likely. Without a clear purpose, the learning conversation is impoverished in the same way any goal-oriented conversation would be if one of the conversants lacks a purpose.

Individual purpose-setting is taking the risk to be an individual. This can be interrupted by fear of change or the need to conform to a group. On the surface it looks like compliance without the energy that accompanies a personal purpose. The term *deflection* describes this type of interruption at this point in an experience, a pushing aside of the experience rather than engaging with it (Clarkson, 1989, p. 81). Lynn scans the students to determine if anyone seems to be just going through the motions: lackluster, half-hearted energy level, body language, facial grimaces. Authentic purposes are energetic, full of spontaneous curiosity. Rote purposes are half-hearted, full of forced concentration and "shoulds," like force-feeding a bad-tasting medicine.

Brainstorming

"OK," Lynn presses on, "I think we're together, so let's start our simulation. Remember, we're pretending to all be in the same cooperative learning group working on our report called 'Family Life in a Meritocracy.' I'm the Taskmaster, who'll be the Timekeeper? . . . Juan, OK, and who'll be the Recordkeeper? . . . Kim, OK, come get these notes from whoever did it last time . . . Let's go.

"OK, so we must remember that we study history so we can understand our own time better. We study history to find our own roots."

Lynn starts a new transparency, a graphic organizer for brainstorming, by putting Family Life in a circle in the center of the screen with one line radiating out.

"Remember, during this step in the group process we brainstorm for a few minutes to predict what we think the authors will be covering. This gets us ready to read efficiently because we'll be looking for answers to our predictions. Our concentration is less interrupted when we read for a purpose.

"So we'll begin by pretending all to be the Family Life group, and we have to think about family life subtopics—housing, jobs, meals, chores, holidays, possessions, entertainment, discipline, schedules, and so forth.

"Last Wednesday we decided to write about a peasant family with three children, two boys and a girl. We decided that we would let the oldest boy study Confucianism day and night for years so he could pass the civil service exam. He had to grow his fingernails long to prove that he wasn't doing manual labor. His share of the work had to be divided among all the other persons in the family.

"Let's see now if we can—in one minute—list some of the effects that the civil service exam from this meritocracy could have had on our family life.

"Yes, Walter?"

"Stress." Lynn repeats "stress" as she writes it on the line radiating out from the circle with "Family Life" in it.

Anna volunteers, "Poverty, because maybe we'd have to pay tuition." Lynn repeats "poverty" as she writes it.

Elvia adds, "Yeah, we might commit crimes to get the money." Jose adds, "Or rustle oxen or something to do his part of the work," which sends a ripple of laughter across the room. The Limited English

Proficient (LEP) students huddle with their Fluent English Proficient (FEP) and native-English-speaking buddies to get the joke, and she writes "crime—Elvia, Jose."

"OK, I just want to say as Taskmaster that we're right on-task, we've brainstormed some ideas that we can find out about."

The Timekeeper calls, "Time!"

Heads are dropping downward toward the texts, eager to check the predictions. I scan the body language of the target students. Christopher seems to be vacantly staring at the KWL chart. The others have engaged looks on their faces.

I consider brainstorming as a phase in which students have to "mobilize" in order to take action on the purposes they've set for learning (Clarkson, 1989, p. 87). It's purpose-setting to want to learn about the effect of Confucius on family life and mobilization to predict what that effect might be. Lynn's strategies to prevent anxiety at this phase are to (a) use brainstorming, which encourages fast, creative thinking, (b) frame their ideas as "just" predictions, (c) set a time limit to prevent judgments of the ideas, and (d) use reflective listening (Rogers, 1961, p. 330) to nonjudgmentally repeat the predictions verbatim rather than using positive reinforcement (Driscoll, 1994, p. 31) such as "Good," or even "OK."

Brainstorming and taking down dictated predictions are techniques that create a creative, nonjudgmental atmosphere to encourage students to risk expressing their ideas in front of their peers. Students who are anxious during brainstorming tend to be those who see everything as right and wrong and, unaware, want only to make a "right" prediction. Giving positive reinforcement during this phase could encourage students to engage for the teacher's praise rather than for authentic reasons.

Rather than authentic engagement with the brainstorming task, students can rely on ideas that they have "introjected," that is, adopted without critical examination (Clarkson, 1989, p. 95). This often takes the form of role playing: pretending authentic involvement, behaving as you think you should instead of authentically. A student motivated to win teacher or peer approval would be tempted to act on an introjection such as, "Say something smart" rather than "Say what you really think."

Another possibility is that students will be introjecting during brainstorming instead of thinking for themselves. One common clue is when a student adapts another's idea and puts it forward as his own, for example, if Walter says "stress," someone else says "strain." This may show the introjection of "Say something quick."

Lynn's strategies to prevent this are to (a) maintain a climate in which it's safe and valued to be yourself, (b) foster a running conversation on the importance of doing your own thinking, and (c) use a lesson format in which brainstorming overlaps purpose-setting to serve as a second entry point for students to engage authentically with the material and the process.

Choosing

Lynn shifts to the next phase of the lesson. "OK, we've got predictions about what we might learn. You could call these ideas hypotheses like we do in science. There is no right and wrong, just ideas.

"Let's take five minutes to read over the section called 'Family Life' to see if these ideas are in the section and, if they are in there, if they are supported by the author, to see if they hold up or not." Heads go down and the LEP/FEP buddies slide together. The buzz of productive voices fills the room.

Christopher's head is down, but I don't believe he's reading; Louis is reading in a soft voice and finger-pointing; Leslie, Greg, and Tim all seem to be reading fine.

I think this phase of the lesson demands that students choose information related to their predictions. Lynn's strategies for preventing anxiety during the reading are to state explicitly that (a) the reading is done in relation to predictions, not to recall everything, (b) the predictions might not be addressed by the author, (c) the predictions might be addressed but not supported by the author, and (d) there's no right or wrong—she uses her authority to give students permission not to worry about getting a right answer.

With freedom to create one's own purpose and predictions comes the responsibility of testing them. During this phase, some students may become anxious with the ambiguity inherent in the task: information may not be there. Their concentration may be interrupted by a fear of loss of control manifested by an overwhelmed or uneasy feeling: "Can I find it? Is it there? What if I can't see it?"

Searching for information may be difficult for students who want to just be told the right and wrong answers by the teacher and author. For those students who come from authoritarian cultures or households in which their independent thought is not nurtured and negotiated in terms of family values, these demands may be so unfamiliar as to be unwelcome. They will become confused, frustrated, perhaps whiney, perhaps tempted to cheat. "You should just tell us if it's not in the book," is the nonverbal message that Lynn will sense from them. This may reflect a widespread introjection that teachers are supposed to tell students what's right and wrong.

Monitoring Choices

Lynn roams the aisles. When the time is up, she asks everyone to turn his or her attention to the board again. "Well, let's see what you've decided about your predictions. Walter, are you keeping, changing, or rejecting your prediction?"

"I'm keeping it."

"How did you decide? Was it something you read or something you know from life?"

"It says that the families were huge and to prevent quarreling they honored and obeyed their elders. There was stress."

Lynn writes "elders" next to Walter's prediction.

"And Anna, Elvia, Jose, what did you find about poverty and crime?"

"We're rejecting that prediction," says Elvia while Anna and Jose nod. "There was a class system, but there were jobs so you didn't have to be totally poor or rustle oxen or whatever. . . ." Another ripple of laughter. "And," Elvia continues, "peasants could get jobs. Maybe our son could work his way through school."

"New prediction, then?" They nod yes.

Lynn marks a line through the poverty and crime predictions and adds their new prediction, "work through school."

"Did the reading suggest any new predictions for anybody else?" she asks and waits. Long silence.

Eyes all appear to be on the cluster. She sweeps her pen around the circle. "So we're saying that jobs have a big impact on family life. Getting our son a civil service job causes stress or causes him to have to leave us to work his way through school and then take the test, yes? Is that familiar, is it like our lives now?" Most hands go up and heads nod affirmatively. "Do we like this? Does our peasant family have a better life if our son gets the job?" Again, most hands.

Lynn scans the room and settles on a quiet boy. "Jorge, your hand wasn't up. What do you think?"

"In my family we were happier in Mexico. Now we are apart."

"Ahhhh," says Lynn, "and were you farmworkers, like in our simulation right now?"

"Yes," says Jorge.

"Anyone else agree with Jorge? That our peasant life in China could be just as happy as if we kept our son at home? That happiness is togetherness more than wealth? That the meritocracy could have a negative effect by pulling our son away? How many agree with Jorge?" A few hands go up.

"And the other side, that family life will be better, maybe we'll leave the farm for the city and have things easier if our son gets a civil service job?" Most hands go up.

"Well, as usual, we have different points of view on what makes us happy and what would make our ancient Chinese family happy. We'll have to read further to find out more about the impact on family life.

"Now how many people have predictions but didn't find information on them yet?" Lots of hands go up. "OK. So do you feel bad because your hunt didn't turn up any answers yet? Yes, I see some glum faces and eyes down. And I wonder if you imagine that Walter feels better or luckier because his prediction was confirmed. How do you feel, Walter?"

"I feel OK."

"Do you feel like you learned more than everybody else? Like it was a contest and you won?"

"Well . . . maybe."

"Then if Anna and Elvia find out information on their predictions tomorrow, do you lose? Or do they win for that day?"

"No . . ." Doubtfully.

"So if we can get the idea of winning and losing out of this . . . feeling like someone is better if he found information, it might help us relax and learn when the time comes?" She scans the group. Some look blank, some puzzled, some angry, most look content.

"Remember that we'll be looking for information in other books and online, so try to keep your confidence in your prediction. You might write it down and have a little talk with it." She points to Anna and Elvia's prediction on the cluster transparency. "Well, my little prediction. I didn't confirm you today but I still believe in you. We'll try again tomorrow." She looks around. "I feel confident, not like I lost out. Try it. I know it's silly but try it and see how you feel inside."

There's a buzz and giggles and the tension in the room gives way to good-hearted recommitment.

Again I scan the target students to see if there's anything predictive of future missing assignments. Christopher is watching the others at his table talk over their unconfirmed predictions. I don't see him speak. Leslie, Greg, Louis, and Tim all seem engaged with others at their tables.

It seems to me that in the monitoring of the predictions, Lynn's prevention strategy was to (a) have students check their predictions against the text, leaving the author to be the authority to confirm or disconfirm ideas rather than her, and (b) talk about the learning process explicitly, acknowledging that it's a letdown when predictions are not confirmed.

The concentration of some students may be interrupted by projecting confidence onto their classmates, diminishing confidence in their own ideas. Lynn intervenes by (a) making the projecting process explicit, and (b) subjecting it to a "reality check."

Furthermore, concentration can be interrupted by "retroflecting," turning an idea or feeling against oneself rather than expressing it toward another. If students are (irrationally) angry at the teacher or classmates, they turn the anger against themselves rather than telling the teacher or classmate. Lynn intervenes in this process by advocating that each student accept himself or herself regardless of where he or she is in the learning process. If they are irrationally angry, it would be valuable information to have about themselves to understand that this is part of the learning process and there's no need to turn on themselves.

Reflecting

"So let's take a moment and reflect on all of what we've done from the very beginning of this simulation. We have set our own purposes, and we had two: one about learning what to do in small groups and the other about the effect meritocracy had on family life. We made predictions about that and checked them out. The book gave us some facts about our predictions, but we've had to make up our own minds, form our own opinions about the impact of the meritocracy on family life.

"Polly, you said that your purpose was to learn about Confucianism. Did you find information and would that be a subtopic that you'd want to cover in our report on how meritocracy affects family life?"

"Yes," says Polly. "It's like Walter said. The elder thing. That was from Confucianism."

"So we've heard the thinking of a few people," Lynn continues. "Let's each take a moment to reflect on the whole process. We took a moment to each set a purpose at the beginning. If we remember our purpose now, we can see the whole process. How many people feel satisfied? frustrated? don't know?"

"Walter, you said satisfied. Why?"

"I met my purpose . . . found the stress stuff."

"OK. Monique, you said frustrated. Why?"

"'Cause I didn't find my purpose. I wanted to know more about the religions in the families but I think it's in another section."

"So now you must be frustrated because I let you read only that one section, yes? Is that true?"

Monique nods. I can see that she's uncomfortable with the blunt way that Lynn has stated the conflict. I think she attributes her failure to meet her purpose to Lynn, although she'd probably never say it openly.

"So you're still waiting to meet your purpose on that. And did you meet our purpose of learning what to do in a small group?"

Monique nods yes.

"You seem to be in touch with something that says, 'I try. I succeed.' Perhaps if you think of yourself as the scientist inquirer, it'll get you in touch with your long-term patience."

Monique looks frustrated but seems to be listening.

It seems clear to me that the reflection phase of a lesson encompasses the entire process, more than just the monitoring phase that precedes it. Reflection is a time when students feel satisfied or dissatisfied. If they feel dissatisfied, it is a clue to prior introjections, projections, and retroflections. In other words, they have made a choice, perhaps unaware, somewhere in the cycle, that has contributed to dissatisfaction at this point.

Dissatisfied students often begin to obsess about what happened to them. If they are unaware of how they themselves contributed to their experience, they may search for someone to blame. This often results in late-breaking claims that the teacher is unfair, the assignment was too long and hard, the book is too boring, and the classmates are too weird. These statements might be clues to how they had interrupted their full concentration at critical moments of those previous phases of the lesson, missed information but never realized it. Remember how this happened in the first chapter when Cara's dad was trying to explain conversions during word problems and she was interrupted internally by her fear of him?

If a student had been aware of interruptions during previous phases, he or she could have raised a hand and asked for help . . . unless, of course, he or she blocked that strategy with yet another introjection such as "Don't ask. You'll look dumb," as we saw in Chapter 2 when Cara didn't understand and knew it and yet didn't ask for help.

Lynn's strategies to prevent anxiety during reflection are (a) to have Polly model her thinking to show how she can get from her purpose to the information she found to a plan for what she'll write in the report, and (b) to state explicit support for those who have not yet met their purposes, labeling that experience as not good or bad but just usual for the inquiry process.

Closure

"It's time to stop," Lynn announces. "We're a little short on time and it's time for recess so I'm not going to get to those of you who raised your hands for 'don't know.' You might write in your regular journals a sentence telling your purpose and a second sentence saying if you met it today or not yet. Also, if you recall that you had some internal interruption to your concentration, you might write about that on our new journal sheet and say if and how you recovered from that."

Kim grabs his journal sheet and begins writing furiously. The recess bell rings and Lynn and I head for the teachers' lunchroom to debrief.

"Kim, I'm going to leave the door open. Mrs. Johnson is right across from the doorway, OK? Take three minutes and then go to recess."

Kim glances up, nods, and resumes journaling.

It seems that Lynn's prevention strategies for anxiety at this phase are (a) to explicitly announce the end of the lesson, yet (b) give some time and space to those who need it. Students are still used to the teacher telling them when to start and stop. Lynn is trying to teach them how to make this decision for themselves by extending reflection to closure and being aware of their experience of stopping.

Some students are struggling with their performance attributions (Weiner, 1986). Their past experiences may have taught them that when they make an effort, they succeed. Now they are frustrated by making an effort and not succeeding . . . yet. To compound the frustration, it seems to them that others "got lucky," so they may be anxiously rethinking their academic strategies and identity, feeling that somehow the rules of the game have changed. Their motivation is at risk. Oldfather (1994) uses the phrase "responsive classroom culture" to describe interventions that address motivation and performance. Lynn intervenes to reframe Monique's perspective by calling the classroom a place of inquiry, not a place of immediate accomplishment.

Kim seems to still have a lot of energy and is not stopping. If he is obsessing, he will have only partial concentration to move on to something else. If Kim is obsessing but he realizes it (awareness) and accepts it, it will ease and he'll get some partial resolution on whatever is interrupting his closure. Lynn limits his time and forces him to take recess as a dual strategy: The writing brings him fully in contact with his issue and recess takes him away so he can get perspective. She'll intervene if he comes back still obsessed, a state called confluence, a flowing together, preoccupied, unable to move on.

Experiment—Try Out the CIR Journal!

Choose someone whose awareness and choices for recovery might be increased by journaling.

Concentration, Interruptions, and Recovery

Everybody knows that athletes such as Michael Jordan have to have great concentration in order to perform well and achieve great feats. You can see the total concentration on Michael's face and throughout his entire body as he shoots a free throw, takes a shot, gets a rebound, or catches a pass on the run. When an athlete performs with total concentration, it makes the game look easy.

Total Concentration

Total concentration helps students learn, too, just like athletes. When the teacher is presenting a new idea such as how light reflects off a mirror at an angle, the student has to concentrate to imagine a light beam hitting the mirror and reflecting away because light cannot be seen by the human eye. This is just one example of many invisible ideas that a student has to imagine and think about.

Concentration Is Often Interrupted

But it can be difficult for an athlete or a student to hold total concentration for a very long time. Things happen that break concentration. These breaks are quite common. We call breaks in concentration "interruptions."

External Interruptions

Some of these things are external, outside the athlete or student. For example, if Michael Jordan gets a bad call against him, it might interrupt his concentration and take him a while to recover from the call and get back to concentrate totally on his game. Likewise, if a student gets a put-down from a classmate, it might interrupt his concentration and take him or her a while to recover and concentrate totally on his or her work. Other examples of external interruptions in the classroom might be: the phone ringing, a fire drill, a classmate asking another student for help, the teacher making an announcement. You can probably think of even more external interruptions that come from other people and the environment. List three external interruptions that you have had in your classroom:

____

____

____

Internal Interruptions

Some interruptions that break concentration are internal. They come from inside the athlete or student. Our brains can't be in total concentration if we have other thoughts or feelings come to mind when we are trying to concentrate.

One of the biggest internal interruptions is self-doubt. Self-doubt is a thought and a feeling that makes you wonder if you have the ability to do something that you are trying to do. For example, if Michael Jordan worries about whether he can shoot over a big guard, then that self-doubt will prevent his total concentration even if it takes up only 1% of his attention. Likewise, if you are not sure how to do an assignment, your concentration will be interrupted by the self-doubt. So internal interruptions come from inside us.

List three internal interruptions that you have had at school:

____

____

____

Learning From Our Interruptions

It might sound like interruptions are bad, but there's a good side to interrupted concentration. We can learn from our interruptions. They tell us more about ourselves so we can get to know ourselves better as students.

For example, if you know that people walking past the classroom door are an external interruption for you, you can use that knowledge about yourself to pick a seat away from the door. That's an example of how we can learn to deal with a common external interruption.

Another example would be using your awareness to figure out that your concentration on reading is often interrupted by put-downs that you hear on the playground even when they were not aimed at you. This tells you that you are very sensitive to put-downs and so you learn something about yourself and the kind of environment you need to help you concentrate so you can learn more.

Recovery

Another good thing—a truly great thing—about interruptions is that we can recover from them. If we have external interruptions, we might have to take some action like getting up and moving our seat or asking someone not to interrupt us. If we have internal interruptions like interrupting thoughts or feelings, we can say to ourselves, "I'll deal with that later," recover our concentration, and keep on working. If we can recover from both external and internal interruptions, it helps our performance as students because we can keep our minds on our work.

Very often an interruption takes just a second or two, so our minds don't get too far away from the work that we are trying to do. Other times our minds can wander far away from the work and it can take a few minutes before we realize that we have been interrupted. But once we realize that we have had an interruption, we can decide how to recover from it.

One difference between external and internal interruptions is that the teacher can sometimes see that a student is being interrupted externally but cannot always see that a student is being interrupted internally. For example, the teacher can see if one student is interrupting another. But the teacher cannot see if a student is looking at the work but is interrupted by worrying or feeling bad. For this reason, students themselves need to become aware of their interruptions in order to take control of their own concentration. This is part of becoming a more independent student as we grow up.

My Concentration, Interruption, and Recovery Journal

Use one page for each time your concentration is interrupted and you need to write about it to recover.

1. Tell what you were working on and what external or internal interruption broke your concentration.

   Example: I was working on my math when John interrupted me by asking me to help him. That was an external interruption.

2. Tell whether or not you were able to recover your concentration. If you recovered, how did you do it? If you recovered, tell how long it took.

Example: I was able to recover. I helped John and then I had to think about where I was before that. It took me a few minutes to get my mind back to where it had been.

3. Tell whether or not you were able to finish the work that you were concentrating on before you were interrupted.

   Example: I did finish the work and handed it in.

   ____

   ____

   ____

   ____

   ____

   ____

5

PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION DURING SMALL-GROUP AND INDEPENDENT WORK

In the last chapter, we learned how to coordinate prevention and intervention strategies for academic anxiety during each phase of a whole group lesson. In this chapter, we learn about interventions when issues arise during small-group work. Finally, we learn about interventions for issues that arise over ensuing days when students work independently during learning center time to develop their separate sections of the small-group report.

Planning for Prevention

During recess, Lynn and I went over the whole class lesson, which she assessed as typical. I reported my conclusion from my observation that Christopher is at risk. "That's *my* prediction about ancient China!" I joked.

We restated our original agreement that I would shadow her during the small-group time (when she circulates between the groups) and I'd especially observe the target students. Among the 30 young-

Table 5.1 Project Development Chart

DAY ONE:

Whole-group simulation on Meritocracy & Family Life.

DAY TWO:

Small groups follow steps of whole-group simulation.

1. Choose roles.
2. Set purposes.
   "What is important for the whole class to learn?"
3. Brainstorm, predict, hypothesize, suppose, venture, guess.
4. Read and choose relevant information from text.
5. Monitor choices for common sense.
6. Think of how to present it to the class to maximize learning.
7. Reflect on the whole process back to setting purposes.
   "Did I get something I could teach to everyone?"

DAY THREE:

Individuals: develop subtopics during learning center time.

DAY FOUR:

Whole class: list subtopics, revise rubric, make timeline for Day 5-?? leading up to the presentation date.

FUTURE DATE:

Group reports. Each person teaches part.
Answer questions. Give quiz.

---

sters, there were six groups of five and the target students were spread among the groups.

After recess, Lynn prepares the class for small groups and reviews the entire process. She reviews the Project Development Chart (Table 5.1) to prevent anxiety issues related to being lost in a process that spans several weeks.

Lynn lays some ground rules: Everyone does a topic that is different from the one they did for ancient Egypt. She explains that this causes more thinking and prevents the temptation to just copy the Egypt report and slot in China information.

Today, she expects everybody to first read the whole chapter in the textbook. Tomorrow, they can begin to look up their subtopics in library books in the room, and after that they can go to the library and lab and search online. Individuals will bring back information and the

Table 5.2 Scoring Rubric

Look for:

Eye contact
Voice
Pronunciation
Clear statement of facts and opinions
Good organization: beginning, middle, end

An outstanding report is complete, accurate, and memorable.

A satisfactory report has minor incompletenesses and inaccuracies. Tell what they were:

An unsatisfactory report has major incompleteness and inaccuracies. Tell what they were:

The presentation was outstanding satisfactory unsatisfactory. Tell what to improve:

---

group will pick what to put in the report based on what they think is important for the whole class to learn about ancient China.

She passes out the scoring rubric for the small-group reports (Table 5.2) and suggests that the groups use it to fast-forward into the future and imagine how the class will learn from them and score them.

She explains how the group process can have internal and external interruptions just like a single person can. So the group needs to identify interruptions, clarify them, decide how to recover, and move on.

Each person in the group has two roles: author of a subtopic of the group report and a role for group process. Lynn points to a chart that lays out the roles.

She stresses the need for students to tolerate the ambiguity of letting the subtopics emerge and of holding on to unverified predic-

Table 5.3 Group Roles

Each person in the group has two responsibilities: (a) take a role in making the multimedia presentation and (b) write a subtopic of the report.

Role in Group	*Subtopic of Report*
Taskmaster	
Recordkeeper	
Timekeeper	
Traffic manager	
Encourager	
Scanner	
Special-effects/button maker	
Hyperlink designer (1)	
Hyperlink designer (2)	
Camcorder operator	
Videotape editor	
Other	

tions. "Recordkeepers, at the end of the session today I'll ask you to take a poll of your group and put an asterisk by opinions that need verifying so we can find out how big a risk we're talking about here."

How Long Does It Have to Be?

Before the groups begin, Kim asks about the length of the report, which carries within it a fear of being judged. Lynn switches from prevention to intervention.

"Kim brings up an issue that I think we should take a minute to discuss before we get into groups, and that is the length of the reports. And that leads into how much information they should have that's verifiable. I know it's hard for you not to have a certain number of pages that are due, and I know it's hard for you to hold some of the predictions as unverified information.

"We have other resources in the room and we'll go to the library in a few days, but even so, I want you to know that this is the way that scholarship is much of the time. If you can accept that and trust that your reports can come together without all the predictions verified, you will be recovering from the anxiety of not having all the answers.

"In the end, we might have to include some unverified opinions as part of our report. That'll be OK as long as we give our reasons. Remember, we're interested in your subject but we're also interested in your educated opinions about the subject, and the report will have facts and opinions that are verified and opinions that aren't.

"Let's say each person has three predictions on their subtopic. Each one would make at least a paragraph in the report. So the reports will be close in length but have different ratios of verified to unverified information. Ours in the simulation was, what? About 50-50, yes? Walter's prediction was confirmed: Anna, Jose, and Elvia's was not."

She pauses to see how they respond. There are a few concerned faces, brows a bit furrowed. "Any more questions? I see questions on your faces. We'll work on those as we go along then. OK, let's get in groups."

Intervening With Small Groups

Lynn sits with each group, listening to their predictions and summaries, and monitoring. She makes notes and clarifies how they can divide their report into subtopics according to their interests without duplicating the reports of any of the other groups. She intervenes in anxiety issues that continue to emerge. I shadow her and take notes.

"How Come It's Not All in Our Book?"

Lynn is visiting a group that has been interested in business and the trade routes such as the Silk Road in ancient China. She joins them as they are monitoring what they've found about their predictions.

"It's hard to find stuff on some of these topics," Hugo says. "The school should get better books about this stuff. We shouldn't have to look all over."

Lynn responds, "Hugo, are you thinking that the quality of your report depends on having all your opinions verified?"

"Yeah, because otherwise you're just flapping your lips, you know?"

"Well, I believe that you believe that. But I also believe that you are capable of forming opinions and hypotheses, too. Maybe I trust your ability more than you do, eh?"

Hugo sighs, shrugs, and shakes his head from side to side.

"I know it's a challenge to put some of your own creativity into this, and I know it's a risk to stand and deliver opinions, but I believe you can and I hope your confidence to do this will grow."

"OK," he answers, looking sullen.

"Our Group's Idea Is a Dud"

While Lynn is scanning and looking for the next group, Joyce waves her over and says that they need help to be more creative with their report.

"Well, what ideas has your group come up with?"

"We want to do education. We have a skit showing a teacher and a student. Like *Kung Fu.*"

"And how you feel about that is . . ."

"Well, it's just our idea . . ."

"Well, that's *automatically* a dud, right?" Lynn says. They giggle a bit. "Get my point?"

Joyce nods yes.

"Well, let me hear something *good* about your group."

"Well, we have great props. . . . Jim's going to draw those dragons on our arms."

"All right! I know doing a new topic is tough for you," Lynn says, "but you seem to be digging in. Do you realize that you just called me over to say that your progress, your concentration on the project, was interrupted by fear that it might be a dud?"

"No, I wasn't thinking of that."

"That's why I'm mentioning it." She turns to the chalkboard nearby and sketches the dialectic triangle. "Now you came to me for assurance in order to recover from that internal interruption of doubt, right? I mean, the issue is resolved and you're going back to work on the project, yes?" Lynn labels the triangle and Joyce brightens.

Observing Target Students in Their Small Groups

I shadow Lynn and, at 11:15, take a turn around the room for some baseline information on the target students.

Tim, the student taking Ritalin for Attention Deficit Disorder, has gone down to the Resource Room. Walter, Jose, Kim, Elvia, and Tim are in the same group. Walter and Kim are telling Elvia and Jose about desktop publishing the report. Elvia is pointing to various maps in the book so they must have selected some geography-related interest for their topic. Kim is focused on how he can scan in the maps and print them out so they can show them. Jose is listening but looking annoyed. Walter is rapt. He seems to be the Recordkeeper and has about three predictions on his clustering diagram. Maybe Tim is supposed to be the Encourager because no one seems to notice that Jose isn't involved.

Louis is a poor reader whom Lynn sees moving about the room often. He seems to be on-task during small group. His group is talking about the warlords, armies, and emperors. Louis is the Traffic Manager, according to the list I see in the middle of the table as I stand nearby. He seems to be contributing a great deal in the group.

Leslie has been described as a capable but teacher-dependent student who cries often and has been taunted for being a "baby." She is with two of the girls whom Lynn said she admires and wants as friends. The group seems interested in robes and jewelry of ancient China. Even the boys have discovered that rank was shown by jewelry. Leslie seems to be the Timekeeper. She is asking questions of the girls she likes and I wonder if she is playing it safe. She certainly isn't showing off.

Christopher, an extremely quiet, overweight boy who has recently enrolled and has been absent a great deal already, is sitting quietly in his group. He appears to be off-task, watching me, until I move behind him and then I can't tell if he was listening and just not contributing. The group is talking about emperors and someone is retelling part of the movie *The Last Emperor*. Finally, I hear Christopher say something about "raids" that he's seen on TV.

So, reflecting on my purpose of discovering anxiety issues among the five target students, I'd observed four in small groups. Of the four, Louis seemed to be concentrating, on-task during the three or four minutes I'd observed and every time I scanned the room. Next was Leslie, who was concentrating at least on what was being said by the girls she admired. Finally, Chris seemed to be interrupted and could be anxious owing to internal interruptions. In addition, Jose's unhappiness had caught my attention.

About 25 minutes had passed and Lynn announced, "OK, let me have your attention. I was working with a couple of groups but it sounded as though all groups were making progress. Let's come back together as a whole class . . . that's it.

"Recordkeepers, remember, put asterisks by unverified predictions on your clustering, then pass them forward. The clusters will tell me the general direction the group is going. But I want to know about the confidence of each of you. So, on a sheet of paper, write me a note, even a sentence that tells me how confident you feel and what concerns you have over any part of the report. Buddies, help each other do this."

There's a flurry of writing, whispering, passing notes forward.

"OK, I'll read these and we'll talk some more tomorrow."

"All the Asians Are Rich Nerds"

After dismissal for lunch, Jose approaches Lynn.

"What's on your mind?"

"I think I should get my group changed. All the Asians just work too hard, and they have computers and stuff at home and spend hours studying like there's nothing else to do. I can't do that."

"So it's good you stayed to talk to me. Maybe there's hope, eh?" His face brightens as he realizes that, yes, he has come to talk without even realizing it.

"I can't compete with all that nerdy stuff."

"So who are those nerds?"

"Kim and Walter and Juan. No, I mean, Kim and Walter and . . ." His voice breaks off and he appears surprised. Trying to recover from the realization that it's really just two people who bother him, or maybe that Juan isn't an Asian, he starts again with a slightly different tack. "Well, Kim and Walter are so tense. We could be doing a skit but they won't. They want to give a straight report that they can print out on their computers and that's no fun and I can't do it." Now he is blurting out what begins to sound like anxiety about his report skills and a bad feeling because he doesn't have a computer at home.

"What about the contribution you made in class today? Was it less than anybody else's ideas? Less than Walter's?"

"No . . . the same."

"But somehow you're not feeling it."

"Maybe. . . ." He shifts his weight from one foot to the other, head dropped.

"Well, that's common. Sometimes we don't give ourselves a pat on the back when we deserve one. I appreciated your participation today . . . even though we're struggling with doing unverified opinions. Listen, why don't you think that over tonight, and write about it to see if you can sort it out. I'll read it tomorrow. Let's see if you can work your own way through this."

"OK." He shuffles out the door, obviously confused.

Monitoring the Partnership

That night, I debriefed with Lynn on the phone. She'd just finished reading through the Recordkeepers' notes and lists of predictions on how a meritocracy affects various parts of the culture.

"Jose *must* have had a hard time in his group. Apparently he didn't feel comfortable to participate at all because his name wasn't on any of the predictions. I wrote a note on the Recordkeeper's cluster to tell the Encourager to get Jose involved." We discussed Jose's anxieties and decided that if he does have a racial prejudice, it might serve to mask his fear of the competition that Walter, Kim, and Juan have begun. Lynn said she'd intervene and repeat the teambuilding if necessary.

Confronting the Nerdy Racial Charge

The next morning, Lynn gets Jose's note as he enters the classroom and takes a few seconds to read it while she's at the doorway. She passes it to me with his permission. He agrees that he did make a contribution during the first part of the lesson but what happened when he got to the small group was that he felt completely put down by the Asian students whose parents own and operate their own businesses, and he thinks they are going to "show him up" in the presentation they are going to make. He reminds Lynn that, in the last presentation, he "made a jerk" of himself and now he feels that they see him as a jerk, too, even though, Lynn tells me later, during the debriefing of that unit he never got any feedback from anyone that he was out of line in any way.

A few minutes before the tardy bell, she motions Jose to her table area near where I am sitting. "I'm sorry you felt put down. How did that happen?"

Jose pauses, thinking. "I don't know."

"I know you felt it. Is it possible that it came from you because you decided they did better last time and because they have computers at home?"

"Yes." Quietly, pursing his lips and frowning.

"That's *so* important for you to know about yourself," she says with deep sincerity. "So this is not about their race or wealth or nerdy tastes, right? It's about you're feeling not OK about yourself and what you own. Is that the truth for you?

"So, I see you need teambuilding with Kim, Walter, and Juan. You can choose to argue for your skit idea. I think your concentration on your skit idea got interrupted when you got scared. Does that sound true?"

He nods yes.

"Could you recover by arguing for a skit, maybe in addition to the straight report?"

"Yes."

"So you're not getting what you asked me for—a change of group, but it seems like changing groups is not the answer to the real issue of how you see yourself, yes?"

"Yes."

"So then your fear gets mixed up with thoughts of race or wealth, agreed?"

Jose hunches his shoulders, but his stance is taller, more confident. Lynn pats his arm and sends him to his seat.

"That could pay off big," she comments as she passes by me.

While students write in response to her prompt on the overhead, Lynn completes myriad clerical tasks. Then she asks volunteers to read their journal entries. Next, she reviews the Unit Development Chart and discusses their task for today: Each person is to develop his or her subtopic for the group report using resource materials placed at each table.

Intervening During Independent Learning Time

The time block before recess is allotted for independent work at the learning center. The students are working for 60 minutes on their subtopics for Ancient China. The task is to search through resource materials on ancient history and geography to find material related to broad areas of interest and specific predictions. Periodically, Lynn calls a group together for extra help with reading at her direct instruction table.

I will observe the target students and intervene with any student who seems anxious. I will make coded notes in my notebook. After center time, during recess, Lynn and I will debrief and plan.

Staring Into Space

Christopher was the most unknown to Lynn, so I decided that I'd better get to him. He had a *National Geographic* open to an article on "China's Warriors" (Mazzatenta, 1996, p. 68) and a piece of blank paper on his desk. His pencil was poised over the paper but he was staring across the room a bit vacantly. I watched for two minutes, then approached. He saw me coming and made eye contact.

"So I see you all ready to work but staring. Is that an internal interruption or are you thinking?" I flash on "the essential delay" from Donald Murray's essay about how the writing process can look like a lot of other things while ideas are percolating (Murray, 1985). Sometimes the classic "daydreaming" can be the creative process.

He shrugs.

"Does that shrug say that you don't know, or that you do know but won't tell me, or something else?"

Another shrug.

"Well, I'm going to take it to mean that you know and won't tell me unless you use your words to tell me another meaning for it. OK?"

Another shrug.

"OK, if you want me to help, raise your hand." I moved across the room out of his sight. I wondered, did he experience my intervention as intrusive? Does he interpret attention from an adult as trouble? Is he withholding in order to maintain his own power in the exchange? I made a few notes and began another encounter.

Copying and Rushing

I approached Louis, who had a paragraph written but I could see it was copied from the book. He had been at the reading group table with Lynn. Perhaps the copied paragraph was the result of a rush to get something on paper to catch up with others.

"Did you have a prediction that you're trying to verify?"

"Yeah. That they blew up towns."

"Did you find information in this book?"

"Not yet."

"So rather than copy this gunpowder paragraph, what could you do?"

"Find a part about blowing up towns."

"Yes, that's the assignment, isn't it? So, Louis, can we think about this in this way: You set your purpose yesterday in small group, right?" He nods in agreement. "Then today you need to concentrate on reading and finding info on your idea but you get interrupted by rushing to get something on the paper instead of thinking that it fits. Is that what it's like in your head?"

He nods yes.

"So can you recover and concentrate and decide for yourself what to put in the report?"

He nods yes again and I pat his shoulder and move on.

Desperate to Make Friends

I watched Leslie "fall apart" (Lynn's words) during center time. She had gotten the Ancient China resource book and found the section on adornments. As I was roaming the room, passing her periodically, it seemed she had been sitting for about 10 minutes looking at the same page when I went by and asked her if her concentration was interrupted.

She said yes, she didn't want to work alone. I asked her what she could do about that and she said work with her group. So she went to make a group with Alexa and Alexandria, who had been working independently. As I monitored from afar, I saw Leslie was listening to them and they seemed not really to ignore her but not include her either. I wondered if they had decided that she has nothing to say because she hadn't spoken up yesterday in small group with them. Today she had found a good source but for some reason did not share it and her paper still had one sentence. I intervened, said I was their unofficial "encourager," and pointed out that they all needed to contribute. I asked Leslie to say something about what she was learning. Very timidly she said that the rich people wore more jewelry, men and women. Then she paused.

I asked Leslie if she wanted me to stay or go and she said stay. Basically, we arrived at the same point she was yesterday in small group: watching the popular girls that she likes. She turned away from the other girls and huddled with me. I drew her a triangle and labeled it with the task and interruption. I asked her if she felt a need to recover and she said yes. I asked her what would help and she said to go back to her own seat and get more information.

She went to her seat and I went the other way. In a few minutes I watched her from a distance. Staring again. I went by in a few minutes. She had a second sentence done and was staring at the book. I intervened again.

I asked her how she could get her mind off her friends. She said that she would and looked at the book. I asked her if she knew how she did that. She said no. I asked her if she figured out her own special way of doing that would she tell me and she agreed.

I asked her if I could help her or if she thought writing in the concentration journal would help and she said no. I told her she seemed very sad and that I was sad that she was sad. She immediately began to finish writing her sentence.

I really was sad. I recalled third grade when I wanted to be the friend of a girl who didn't want to be my friend. Amazed at the power of the memory, I went down the hall for a drink of water.

A Good Excuse to Socialize

When I returned, I noticed Gregory over at Louis's desk so I went over. Louis was reading Gregory's paper. I read over his shoulder. The prediction was at the top of the paper, and three paragraphs seemed to address it. Seemed like satisfactory work to me. I asked Gregory for his opinion of it and he said he wasn't sure but thought it was OK. I asked how he decided and, instead of telling me how he decided it was OK, he said, "I show it to Louis."

"So if Louis decides it's good, then you know it's good?"

He nods yes, that's it.

"So you have good concentration and finish the assignment. But then when you reflect you don't finish deciding if it's good. So you bring it here to have Louis decide?"

He nods yes.

"Hmmm," I say, thinking that this has to do with Gregory using the paper to get Louis's approval. Then Louis gets to look at a paper that can be a model for him and Gregory gets Louis's approval.

"Well, Louis, does it get your stamp of approval?"

"Yeah," he said.

"So, Gregory, are you an external interruption for Louis right now?" He nodded yes. "And I am, too, right? Let's let him get back to work, OK?" We moved away and Louis looks back at his book.

I'm in Special Ed

All this time, Tim seems to have been on-task. Finally, I wander by his desk, really not wanting to interrupt him because he missed most of his small-group meeting yesterday. He doesn't need any more interruptions, I think, but I need to get some observations for Lynn.

I stand behind him for a minute and he keeps writing. He has a map open and his paper has two paragraphs. He stops finally and just hands me his paper.

"Well, how's it going," I ask.

"OK," he says.

"How do you decide that?" I probe.

"Juan told me what we did yesterday and so I made a prediction and got this magazine and found what I needed."

"So you know it's OK because you knew how to do it or because you were lucky?"

"Both. Some people can't find anything yet," he says. "But I hit on this. You know I'm in special ed."

"Yes, but I don't know what that means," I reply because he brought it up.

"Well, I can concentrate better with my medicine."

"Oh. Well, you do seem to have concentrated on this," I answer, handing the paper back. "Does the medicine cause you to do OK?"

"Yes," he answers immediately and convincingly.

"OK then." I pat his arm and move on.

Winding Up

I take a last turn around the room and move to a corner of the room to summarize. Christopher has folded his paper and tucked it into the magazine he was using. If he returns it to the resource shelf, he'll lose his paper. Louis is reading and has added a sentence more than the copied paragraph. Leslie seems to be talking a bit to her friends. Tim is completely on-task. Gregory is entering his report into the computer.

The bell rings and everyone lines up for recess. Lynn and I huddle together in the teachers' lunchroom. I give her my report and it seems to confirm what she knows about the students. She knows about Leslie and Gregory's social needs but likes getting more detail about how they struggle to be independent. She agrees with Tim about his improved ability to focus.

Solving the Missing Work Mystery

Reflecting on the original "mystery of the missing work," it seems that a partial solution is possible from the observations so far.

Chris is the main challenge, because he's seriously interrupted in sessions with the whole class, especially in small group, and critically so during independent time. Where is his mind? If gestalt theory is correct and his attention is directed to the most dominant need, what need is he going to meet when his face is vacant? If the interruption serves to keep him safe, what is the threat? When he fails, does it fit with what he believes about himself? What will he do or say when I show him himself on tape?

Greg is fine in whole group and small group but needs to see that his interruptions during independent time interrupt Louis. Where are his assignments when they're missing? I rule out a skill issue, because I've seen that the interpersonal interruption doesn't result in incomplete work; I suspect an intrapersonal issue. Using the dialectic as a tool, I generate a hypothesis: I see a productive, cooperative student; the polar opposite would be a rebellious, nonproductive student. A rebel might not hand in homework, might even hide it from himself, keep himself unaware. That way he'd be more like Louis. Makes a sensible hypothesis. Together the good student and the rebel form a whole personality with a complete range of characteristics. It's something that I'll be interested in hearing emerge.

Leslie's concentration during whole group seems fine but, as she is aware, seems interrupted in small group and even more so during independent learning time. This causes little work to be finished, but I predict she will use her awareness to finish her part of the small-group report. The alternative would be to embarass herself in front of the girls whose friendship she is attempting to win.

Louis seems on-task, concentrating well during small group. He has some awareness of how his need to respond to Greg is interrupting his concentration and resulting in work mostly undone. Louis's labored reading is slow and I suspect that he socializes to avoid it. I'll find out more when I tape and interview him.

On the other hand, Tim believes that he is in a state of interruption unless he takes medication. He attributes a great deal to his medication. I don't know if that's true about his concentration, but I do know that his skill can be attributed to his efforts. He appears to be concentrating just fine. Awareness raising for him might bring his skill and concentration to his awareness so he will be more in touch with his whole process.

6

PROVIDING STAFF DEVELOPMENT

In previous chapters, we have learned that academic anxiety can be addressed with dialectic dialogue as it occurs throughout the lesson cycle. In this chapter, we'll learn how dialectic dialogue and the lesson cycle also pertain to issues that emerge during staff development. In addition, we'll learn the psychological terminology for the various types of interruptions that occur throughout the lesson cycle.

Conducting a Needs Assessment

The other teachers had seen Lynn and me debriefing and planning in the lunchroom and wanted me to help them as well. I could appreciate their requests because I know it's difficult for them to find time and resources to collaborate with each other. On the other hand, I wasn't sure that they would be as willing as Lynn had been to integrate new concepts (concentration, interruption, recovery) into their instruction, nor did I know if they used student-centered techniques such as open-ended questions. I drafted my own ambivalence, wrote about it in my journal, and discussed it with Lynn. I finally decided that, if my ideas were good and useful they would stand on their own, but I could stay in touch to exert influence on their use. I wanted also to let go; I knew that it was likely that others would create uses that I hadn't yet thought of, and that was exciting. I decided to let go and learn.

I want to expand
this project.

I feel protective.

Don't want to
expand.

I can let go and trust my ideas
and other's expertise.

I can stay in touch with others and exert my
influence on how they use the ideas.

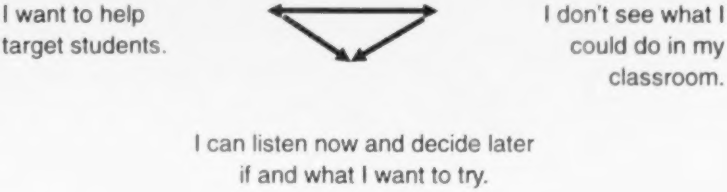
As we discussed the possibility of a staff development, I found a number of teachers who were interested. I asked them to fill out a brief needs assessment survey so I could document each teacher's goals in light of how he or she understood the current situation and what each of them hoped for. We approached the principal, who arranged the three-session workshop run by Lynn with me helping.

Leading the Group Process

Set Purpose

Even though the teachers had initiated the staff development project, each one had some degree of misgiving about what he or she could take away. I reframed the dialectic as change—misgiving—possibility. As Lynn led the round-robin purpose-setting, I drafted a dialectic for each teacher on the board, frequently suggesting the possibility, and verifying it. That way we knew the situation.

Teacher Annette Hall taught math to seventh graders. She said she was always impressed with the sixth graders who came from Lynn's class. Most could really help each other without cheating, really explain and think out loud. She had several students whom she had been thinking were learning disabled but now she was wondering if it might be academic anxiety. She said that when she had filled out the needs assessment survey she didn't have a clear vision of what she wanted as a result of staff development other than to help those specific students.



I want to help target students.

I don't see what I could do in my classroom.

I can listen now and decide later if and what I want to try.

Steve Schoen was the other math teacher. "I'm ready for action," he reported. "I've been taking this grad school course where we're reading about these experiments on problem solving: His math students would start a problem and never look back and get it wrong but a true problem solver would get part way into it and pull back, reconnoiter, and take a different route if needed. Man, that's for me. I really want to add that to my 'talk us through the problem' approach."

"I'm curious, is that Alan Schoenfeld's research?" I interjected (Schoenfeld, 1989).

"Yes, and the thing is, when I read it for that class, it was the students who had Lynn last year who could reflect and regroup when necessary. So if that's like what you've been doing, I'm ready to jump in."

"So if you're not certain that Lynn's approach is what you have in mind, how would you want to handle that?" I asked, sketching his dilemma as polarities with the double-headed arrow.

"Well, I'd like to see what Lynn does."

"So this would be the resolution," I commented, completing the dialectic:

I'm eager to start problem-solving.

I wonder if this matches what I'm wanting.

I can watch Lynn and decide

"Back to you, Lynn," I said, thinking she'd continue going around the group. She understood me to mean that she should take her turn at that point, so I mapped it out for her. Lynn was ready to share her expertise, motivated, she said, by the insights that she'd gotten into how kids were being overplaced for special ed.

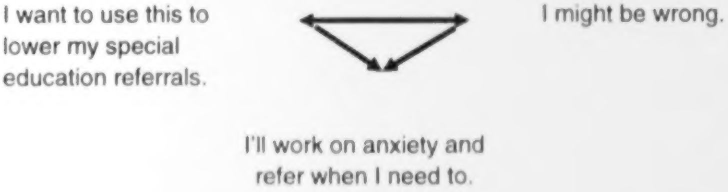
"I agree with Annette that we see lack of concentration or we see fear and we usually jump right to referring to the school psychologist, which takes a long time, and in the interim the kids have to go on learning anyway. Mostly the journaling has brought out all the other issues that can be interrupting concentration. Actually, special ed can make the situation worse because on top of everything else, the kid has to come and go during lessons and can easily get behind. What if anxiety is the problem but the kid decides that it's because he's disabled and then starts expecting not to keep up? That's a self-fulfilling prophecy. A scary one." She hesitates and shakes her head in frustration. "But I don't know if I'm right on this. If you don't have them tested and placed and they need it, that's not helping either."

I jumped in to help her clarify. "So what feels right for you to do?"

"Keep on keeping on," she answered, and we all chuckled.

"So, Lynn, does this fit for you?" I asked, showing a dual approach.

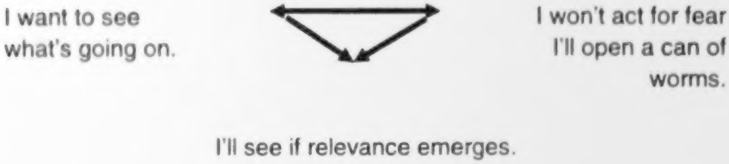
"Yeah, that's it."


I want to use this to lower my special education referrals.
I might be wrong.
I'll work on anxiety and refer when I need to.

Mae was the next teacher to speak. She taught fifth grade next door to Lynn and seemed to use traditional, mostly follow-the-text methods. She seemed to be interested in joining the group only because she had not targeted any students on her needs assessment survey.

"Frankly, I'm afraid that I'll find out about abuse and that's why I don't have them write in journals or touch on anything from home," she said.

"So maybe something will emerge for you down the line," I said. "I'm thinking of a text I use in my graduate classes that stresses that relevance emerges, it's not a 'given' up front" (Brooks & Brooks, 1993).


I want to see what's going on.
I won't act for fear I'll open a can of worms.
I'll see if relevance emerges.

Scott Moore had come in late and was the last to speak. He was the other sixth-grade teacher, Lynn's counterpart. I was surprised to see him as I didn't have a needs assessment survey from him.

"I was asked to come here by the principal and frankly, I don't know what to make of it."

"Did she give any reason?" Lynn asked.

"No, she visited my room today and we had our follow-up conference just before I came here. We were talking about discipline and she said I should come over here and check it out."

"Well," Lynn replied, "some of my discipline problems have been my target students for anxiety. I think that when they get anxious they divert themselves any way they can and that can get them in trouble."

"Maybe that's it. So I'll just hang in here if that's OK with you." He looked at me.

"Sure," I answered. "I've been diagramming everyone's ambivalences or misgivings, or self-doubts, or whatever. This is my idea of a dialectic; you might know it from undergrad philosophy classes: thesis, antithesis, synthesis?" I said, showing the others' transparencies. "How about this for you? To be continued, right?" He smiled and relaxed back into his chair. I passed him a blank needs assessment and looked at Lynn, who moved on.

I was referred by the principal. ↔ I'm not sure why . . . discipline?

Lynn finished the rounds and it turned out that the remaining teachers wanted to adopt the dialectic of others. Bob and Etta seconded Lynn's dual approach; Woody, Dave, and June seconded Steve Schoen's readiness, Woody especially to try out journaling with their classes; Terry and Ken sided with Annette to gather more information— they wanted to search some World Wide Web sites to see what kids could find to supplement the social studies text.

Brainstorming

We next moved to an open-ended self-assessment of sorts that seemed to fit for the moment.

"We probably all agree that when we teach, we try to teach awareness of the learning process along with the content, yes?" I asked. "Helping students resolve academic anxiety is built around dialectic dialogue, which is the idea that we want to focus on. We used 'concentration-interruption-recovery' to raise awareness with Lynn's class. But the heart of it is evoking the internal process. It's not the first effort to do this."

"Let's brainstorm our backgrounds for working with this," Lynn says, stepping to the overhead. They name a number of experiences they've had with raising awareness of the learning process:

- Conflict resolution
- Class meetings
- Magic Circles
- Guided imagery
- Open-ended questioning
- Active listening
- Inner critic
- Gang interventions
- Debriefing
- Dialogue journals
- Inquiry approach
- Peer mediation

Figure 6.1.

Action

"Boy, we really cover the gamut," I comment as I switch places with Lynn. "Let me see if I can organize these ideas to serve as our background to help us understand the dialectic dialogue.

"We seem to start way back with the inquiry tradition when we built the curriculum around social studies and asked open-ended questions, right?" (Taba, Durkin, Frankel, & McNaughton, 1971).

"Well, at least we don't start with Socrates," quips Sid. That brings a round of good-natured laughter.

"Yeah, in Socratic dialogue with ourselves," I say laughingly, "the dialectic dialogue can be thought of as open-ended questions that inquire into our moment-to-moment learning process. Like 'Am I interrupted right now?' 'By what?' 'How can I recover? "

"Some of these I associate with the open education movement . . . the sixties that happened in the seventies, right?" I continue, circling 'guided imagery' and 'class meetings.' This brought more chuckling. "So that's when there was a Ford Foundation Project at Esalen Institute up at Big Sur where the early gestalt educators were trained. George Brown came out of that and started the Confluent Education Department at UC Santa Barbara. 'Confluent' refers to the flowing together of cognitive and affective aspects of learning like in 'guided imagery' to prompt writing. Dialectic dialogue comes from the same source as confluent education.

"From that tradition, we have independent learning center time and that is why we need the students to be aware of their own learning from moment to moment; because we can't monitor it as we're moving around doing other things.

"That reminds me of Violet Oaklander's (1978) book, *Windows to Our Children,* because we're asking students to use the concentration journal as a window to their learning process. Violet is a gestalt therapist who was in special education for years. I think her methods exemplify working holistically, what Gardner (1983) calls 'multiple intelligences.' In terms of academic anxiety, being aware of the types of issues that interrupt concentration—skill, interpersonal, and intrapersonal—would relate to Gardner's logical and personal intelligences.

"Of course active or reflective listening was happening at that time. Carl Rogers was doing projects in L.A. Unified," I say, circling that. Dialectic dialogue depends on close listening to one's inner voice (Rogers, 1961).

"Also Palomares was doing conflict resolution, Magic Circle, right? And Glasser was doing class meetings as part of Reality Therapy? You might think of the dialectic as an inner conflict" (Glasser, 1965; Palomares, Logan, Weber, Willson, & Kellison, n. d.).

"Is there anything new under the sun?" jokes Mae.

"You know how the pendulum swings . . . goes around, comes around," suggests Annette.

"I'd say that the eighties made a difference," I counter. "There was a ground swell from behaviorism to cognitivism with 'psycho-sociolinguistics' becoming 'whole language' and the Bay Area Writing Project becoming the nationwide writing projects. Oh yes, and cooperative learning with the teambuilding, feedback, debriefing dialogues.

So we journal through our interruptions and support each other" (Weaver, 1988; Kagan, 1992).

"And cooperative learning reminds me of how useful that has been as our classes have gotten more and more diverse. Lynn has four home languages in her room, same as most of you. The multicultural aspect comes up in dialogue all the time, mostly for me in terms of having to negotiate the power. It definitely connects with awareness of the learning process." Heads are nodding. "Kathy Au says we need to rethink our patterns of interactions to respond to diversity (Au, 1993). You know what I mean; it's there at nearly every moment." More nods.

"And here's an interesting angle. Lynn and I totally agree. One area of commonality is that the kids aren't aware of their feelings." Lynn nods. "Think about it. It's not OK to be too emotional; being emotional is pejorative, like temperamental. Where I was raised, it means weak, vulnerable, even unstable. " Some nods. "So they lose touch with their emotions, except when they are extreme and they let them go on the playground. They don't have the vocabulary for the middle, contented area. They'll say 'OK, I feel OK,' but somehow it's empty. Watch for that. I want to know what you see."

"How we feel about it, right?" Bob asks. Laughter.

"Finally we have current times, conflict resolution and peer meditation dialogues, right? If the violence in schools upsets you, read *Possible Lives* by Mike Rose. His early work was on writer's block and then heading up the open-admissions tutoring at UCLA—documents some great learning going on in classrooms" (Rose, 1995).

"And finally the dialectic dialogue that we're developing right here. I'd say it comes out of this long tradition of inquiry related to the students' need to regulate their learning process (Garcia, 1985, 1994).

"And if I could just add the research angle to this, I'd say that what we're doing right here is telling our story about dialoguing with our students, and in the research community narratives are gaining increased credibility. There's great interest in our stories, the kids' stories.

"So we have a lot to build on. Who knows where you all can take it from here. Let's get to Lynn's story and see what happens."

Narrative

Next, Lynn told her story about the missing work and how the "anxiety project" had given her the information she needed. It had supported her efforts to help the students know and talk about their feelings, especially those who had been acting impulsively.

Monitoring

We had circulated the Concentration-Interruption-Recovery journal as others had requested over the past year and again two weeks before the meeting. It had been one of the reasons people had become interested in our work. But Lynn paused in her description to make sure that she was on target and people were getting what they needed to know.

Further Narrative

Getting the go-ahead, she described how our collaboration and the anxiety journaling and the emphasis on feelings in the morning writing prompts had been immediately helpful in raising the awareness of the target students, Louis, Gregory, Leslie, Christopher, and Tim. It had been instrumental in reframing Tim's low self-esteem as a self-fulfilling prophecy about being labeled learning disabled. It had revealed an approach to convince Christopher's mother to give him more of her attention and get him some counseling. Lynn added that she was glad she had an alternative besides making a referral for testing for a learning disability.

We read some of the journal entries (Resource B) and discussed how they showed combinations of skill, interpersonal, and intrapersonal issues. We discussed some of the more revealing entries and quipped about "the secret lives of students."

I showed a brief videoclip of Louis's interruption during learning center time. I described the stimulated recall procedure I used (Conners, 1978), showing him the videoclip and asking him if he remembered what he was thinking and feeling as he decided to leave his seat. I read from my notes that he reported being interrupted by worry that his other group members would lose their report by not saving before closing the computer down. I read from his journal how he had difficulty recovering from the interruption and struggled all the way to recess, ending up with two sentences to take to group the next day.

Mae said that she felt encouraged that Lynn hadn't run into an abuse problem yet, although she thought Christopher sounded somewhat neglected, and she thought it would be just a matter of time before abuse was revealed as an interruption. Lynn said she didn't want to sound defensive or push Mae to use the dialogue before she was ready, but abuse has been revealed through traditional dialogue although if we teach kids to be more aware, they might be aware of more than their learning process. That brought on a round of great heavy sighs, rolling of eyes, and regretful shaking of heads. It was a moment of bonding despite the risk.

Reflection

We broke into small groups, each led by the teacher for whom I had made the dialectic triangle. Annette Hall's group, including Mae, felt ready to work concentration-interruption-recovery terminology into their teaching but not the journaling. Steve Schoen had decided he wanted to pursue the dialectic dialogue but would point out to his students that concentration doesn't mean rush through, that it means also pull back and reflect, which shouldn't be mistaken as an interruption. He was not only ready to journal but also ready to videotape. His group members, including Scott, were ready to journal now; videotape was a "we'll see."

Closure

Back in whole group, I pointed out how we had placed ourselves at three developmental levels that we knew from the technology project: novices, still mostly gathering information; experimenters, applying information with students; and sophisticates, ready to guide others (Garcia, 1994).

I asked for an update from Lynn and she said she was happy to have done this and was looking forward to the next session. She asked for my update and I said how pleased I was to have been understood (got a big laugh) and pleasantly surprised and not at all defensive that Steve had already planned how to adapt the dialogue for his problem solving (an actual round of applause).

We exchanged e-mail addresses for online support and scheduled the next meeting for a month hence.

Providing Ongoing Support

After the session, I received a number of academic anxiety memoirs and autobiographies. They ran the gamut: writing blocks, math anxiety, science anxiety, test anxiety, foreign language anxiety, speech blocks, stage fright, listening blocks, technophobia, anxiety about reading out loud, camcorder anxiety, spelling anxiety. My first response was to answer each e-mail and attach a list of academic anxiety resources, both self-help and professional resources (Resource A). I thought that would help counter the isolation aspect of the problem.

I also suggested that each teacher with some type of academic anxiety follow the same advice that we had recommended for the students: dialogue about concentration, interruption, and recovery, and keep writing to me. This was quite successful. They tended to send status reports of the progress they were making with their own issues as well as report on the use of the terminology, handouts, or both in the classroom.

In preparation for our second session, I suggested to Lynn that we be ready to go a step further and introduce a diagram I'd made called "Possible Dialectics throughout the Lesson Cycle," which placed a dialectical triangle at each phase of a typical lesson. The cycle came from the gestalt literature where it is called "the cycle of experience" (Perls et al., 1951), referring to the need-fulfillment process that sustains both physical and psychological health. It had been adapted by Petruska Clarkson (1989, p. 50) to show possible defense mechanisms at various phases of an experience. I had adapted it for our purposes by conceptualizing the possible experience at each phase of a lesson as a dialectic.

When I showed it to Lynn, she was uncertain of its staff development value. "It's those psychological terms that seem very esoteric," she remarked, raising her eyebrows.

"Oh, c'mon, don't get anxious on me," I chided, and we laughed about anxious staff development leaders leading staff development on anxiety. "Yeah, say that three times fast!" I challenged. That broke the tension. "Well, let's see if I can talk my way around this so you can relate to it." She agreed.

"Inside the circle is the student who needs to concentrate and digest the material from outside the circle, the environment in which the teacher, the text, and the classmates are located, right? There's a

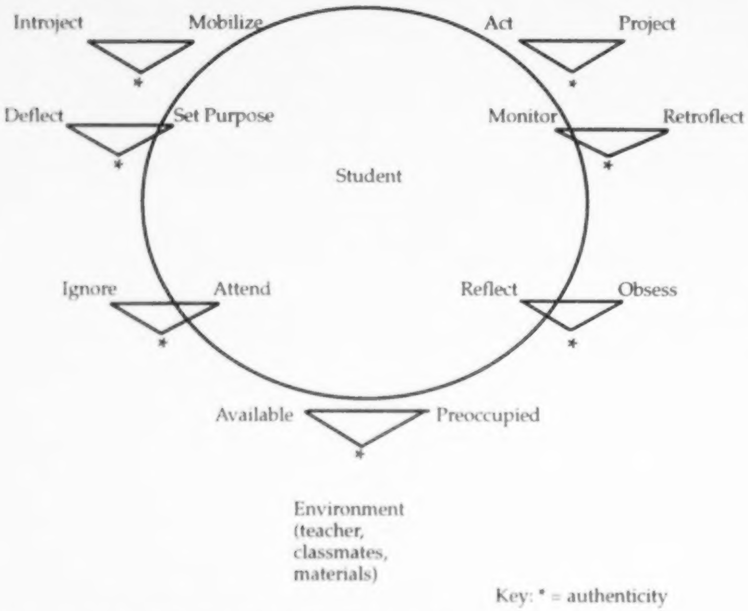

Introject
Mobilize
Act
Project
Deflect
Set Purpose
Monitor
Retroflect
Student
Ignore
Attend
Reflect
Obsess
Available
Preoccupied
Environment (teacher, classmates, materials)
Key: * = authenticity

Figure 6.2. Dialectics Occurring Throughout the Lesson Cycle
SOURCE: Modified from Clarkson, 1989.

boundary, the line at which they contact each other, the point of transaction." I point to the perimeter of the circle.

"If the student is discriminating, a connoisseur of ideas, a critical thinker from beginning to end, then the process tends to be healthy and nourishes growth. That's indicated by the terms nearer the center of the circle. Those terms would make the ideal anxiety-free lesson for the student.

"Now let me switch to first person and talk myself around the ideal anxiety-free lesson cycle like I have a thirst for knowledge. At first I'm mentally available to get a message; I'm not too preoccupied.

"So when you say, 'Pay attention' I respond, 'I'm hungry.'

"So you say, 'Set a purpose,' and I respond with, 'I want to eat.'

"Then you say, 'Mobilize yourself. Make a prediction about what you think you'll get,' and I say, 'I'll go here or there to eat. This or that would taste good to me.'

"Now you say, 'Act!' and I fly into action to order and ingest. If the food matches my prediction, I bite, chew, savor, and swallow.

"After that, you say, 'Monitor to see if you got what you ordered.' I answer, 'Yes, it was just what I had in mind.'

"'Reflect,' you say, 'did it match the purpose you set at the beginning?' and I say, 'Yes, I was hungry and I ate. I'm satisfied.'

"Lastly, we stop the whole cycle. In a while, I'll be available again because hunger is a recurring need that emerges to be fulfilled."

I recounted how the phases of her ancient China simulation on "family life" tracked around using the terms closest to the middle.

"But each phase has a risk. The student is required to make some type of choice. Many of the choices are outside the control and observation of the teacher.

"The student has to be responsible for his or her choices. That's the difficulty. The premise is that they fear becoming their own persons. And that's where these psychological terms come in. They are the interruptions to that healthy, concentrated metabolism process. They are the way that the person clings to safety.

"So you say 'Attend,' and I don't check in with myself to see if I even have an appetite. I may activate a schema such as 'look at the teacher,' when you are pointing to material on the agenda and want me to activate schema related to ancient China.

"This is how you become puzzled when you are teaching the whole class. Everyone is looking but not everyone is engaged in the same way.

"You move on and say, 'Set your purpose,' but I just don't do it. Why? Maybe something more pressing has my concentration. Maybe I don't know how. Maybe I have an unaware assumption from previous experiences that I can't do it. Maybe I want someone to do it for me. Maybe in my family or culture it's frowned upon. I respond by 'deflecting' your directive, pushing it aside. In the eating analogy, I don't really decide if I'm hungry or want to eat. I don't choose.

"In the ancient China lesson, Christopher didn't set a purpose. Louis may have adopted a purpose. Leslie wanted to have the same purpose as the popular girls. Other people picked from the K-W-L chart but who knows how deeply engaged they were with that purpose.

"The more authentic the purpose is, the more deeply and meaningfully it's processed, in my opinion. Cognitivists write about *meaningfulness* as overlap between the new and the known (Ausubel,

1968) whereas gestaltists talk about the importance of the 'felt need,' and the humanist Carl Rogers (1969) insisted that 'all learning is personal.'

"Now you think I have set a purpose so you say, 'Predict! Brainstorm!' but I don't have a purpose to brainstorm about. If I uncritically adopt someone else's prediction, I'm introjecting, which means swallowing whole. In the eating analogy, I'd order what I think I should or what my friends order because I don't know that I'm hungry so how can I decide what I'm hungry for?

"Christopher, Louis, and Leslie are at risk of rote learning rather than meaningful learning because they still need investment, engagement, a felt need. If they ride on someone else's prediction I suppose they'll learn a little something.

"Now you say, 'Act! Read! Make choices!' and I go through the motions, now at risk of not comprehending. I don't have a purpose or a prediction. In the eating analogy, I have ordered what I thought I should, but I start to see other people eating and savoring, so I begin to project. They get it, I don't get it. I see in others what I don't contact in myself: my power of engagement, investment, choice.

"In the China lesson, some students find information before others and you have worked hard to help them have patience and tolerance for the process. That supports them so they don't make these projections. Especially those who are learning rotely need that tolerance so they can feel able to cycle back and find an authentic purpose.

"Moving on, you say, 'Monitor!' Does the information fit the prediction? If I am already thinking, 'I don't get it and they do,' I begin to retroflect, to turn against myself in self-doubt, worry, anger, or frustration. How did others get it and I didn't? In the eating analogy, I would say, 'I ordered what I thought I should but it didn't do much for me.' This is the phase in which I'm at risk of generalizing, 'I'm not good at social studies.'

"In the China lesson, you intervened with Joyce, who thought her group's lesson was a dud. That may have begun as an introjection, 'There's a best way to do this and I wouldn't know it based on my academic past.' See how past experiences and beliefs emerge to interrupt the creative process here?

"And an even more dramatic example was Jose's experience in small group. He didn't mention a skit (deflection) because he believed that Walter and Kim's straight report idea was better (projection) because of their race and class (introjections). Thus he was unhappy with himself (retroflection) and had a long story to tell (obsession) and needed you to raise his awareness of how he had interrupted his process from the beginning.

Lynn looks at me and widens her eyes. We both break out in laughter.

"Well, that's my theory of what happened," I say, still giggling. "Let me finish and then we can decide if you even want to use this in the staff development, OK?" She nods approval.

"Next you say, 'Reflect on the whole process. Did you meet your purpose?' Already retroflecting that 'I'm not good at this,' I'm now at risk of obsessing on how this all has happened to me, at risk of feeling victimized by the whole process. I may wonder, complain, and blame. These thoughts consume my attention, reducing the likelihood that I'll finally set a purpose and start thinking for myself.

"In your class I think that Tim is most at risk at this phase of any lesson because he expects himself to be slower than others although he knows he does the same work. 'I'm flawed,' is the introjection; 'Others are faster,' a projection. I myself don't know where the truth may be in all that. If he consumes himself with these thoughts during lessons, they will interrupt his concentration and make it a self-fulfilling prophecy so he has to work harder and longer, but it's because he's processing more, not because he lacks the ability . . . perhaps . . . another theory, y'know?"

We sit in sobered silence for a few moments and then I press on.

"Finally, we come to the end of the cycle. You say, 'Stop! Finish!' But if I am obsessing, I am still processing projections, retroflections, introjections. I may put the materials away and look like I'm moving on. Or I may deflect the whole experience, sweep it under the carpet. But issues that have emerged are still in process. They are stored in some schema and will reemerge when that schema is next activated. This is called 'unfinished business of the organism.'

"Theories: Christopher is dealing with unfinished business. He barely begins his work and then he's off somewhere. Or maybe it's an introjection about the value of going to school. Leslie has unfinished business with herself . . . projects her well-being onto the popular girls. Greg has unfinished business with his self-acceptance, projects it onto Louis. Tim projects his wholeness on everyone else.

"That's it," I say, sinking back in the chair and blowing a stream of breath up my forehead.

"That's a lot. It's clinical."

"Too much, or just wrong for what we need next? Do you think it fits anywhere? I don't want to be defensive. I was imagining Steve . . ."

"Yeah, Steve. But I'd ask him first."

"Good idea. I'll send him an e-mail and if he wants to take it on, we can go for it as a pair or a breakout group or whatever."

It seemed that the second session would be a logical extension of the learning cycle begun in the first session. Anyone who wanted to tackle the "Possible Dialectics . . ." could meet with me in a small group. We agreed that the value of that handout was to remind us to be explicit about the nuances of the task requirements as we proceeded through a lesson.

Taking Further Steps

The second staff development session got right down to business.

Set Purposes

Lynn made a "round" to check what each person needed. Turned out that people had dialogues to relate.

Mobilize

We made an agenda on the board of whole-group and small-group activities. Everyone wanted to hear the dialectic dialogues. Then we would break into small groups to react and then hear from those who were using the terminology.

Narratives

Selected dialogues were read and illustrated. Many commented on how they didn't think they would remember them at first but how easy it was to remember them verbatim or nearly verbatim.

I had been eagerly waiting to hear how Steve Schoen helped his students to discriminate between reflective problem solving and interrupted concentration. He said that so far he hadn't had a problem. He had just told them that a pause can be for reflection or can be an interruption. "So far, so good," was his conclusion.

Monitor. In small groups it was verified that we'd heard what we expected to in terms of the dialectic dialogues. I sat with Steve and three others explaining the "Possible Dialectics . . ." sheet while Lynn visited the other small groups. Mae's group was finding it easy to use the concentration-interruption-recovery vocabulary for the whole class.

Reflect. Lynn called us back to the whole group and we reflected on what we had gained from the session. Each member reassessed and committed to further experimentation according to need.

We negotiated the time of the next meeting as well as interim visits to each other's classrooms.

After the second session, teachers sent me samples of dialectic dialogue that I could use in this book and in my graduate courses. Teachers continued to explore their own learning interruptions. The big surprise to me was how many had "wanted to write" and had never gotten around to it. I was the happy recipient of newly penned works.

Session 3 followed the format of sessions 1 and 2 with essentially the same outcomes. Some teachers moved from Annette Hall's novice group and joined Steve's group to experiment with journaling.

Steve and his students had written their math autobiographies. Even in the early discussions, he could see that broader issues such as general achievement were becoming relevant to the topics. He felt the students were serving as a peer support group. "They understand, though, that there's a limit to how much they can psych each other up. They say it's an 'inside job' that each person has to take care of."

In my continuing effort to explain the learning cycle on some common ground between education and psychology, I developed a chart to compare concentrated learning with interrupted learning (Resource B) and another to compare "mental metabolism" with physical metabolism (Resource C). These were well received by Steve Schoen's group, which used them to "talk their way through" the phases of the learning cycle with the dialectic triangles. They began experimenting with the terminology in their own words.

I became convinced that Lynn was right about the subtle nature of much of the learning process. I increased the amount of videotaping to "show" rather than "tell" what we are learning about the learning process. With the help of able graduate students, I created a most helpful multimedia presentation of a second grader who self-refers to the university clinic, with help from his responsive mother (Garcia, 1996).

The "mystery of the missing assignments" was solved by demystifying the learning processes of the student. Although there are still missing assignments, students are better able to account for the process by which assignments fail to be turned in. They remain willing to attribute it to their own interrupted learning processes.

Experiment—Take the Lead!

We've seen academic anxiety addressed in tutorial, teaching, and staff development situations. In each situation the cognition, metacognition, attributions and pre- post-assessments elements comprise much of the students' phenomenologies. Create a matrix that shows each element of phenomenology for each type of situation. If you were leading staff development for the teachers in this book, how would you proceed?

7

PLANNING AND CONDUCTING PARENT CONFERENCES

When we first met Lynn Noonan, she described students she was anxious about because she didn't know what was going on with them and she didn't know what to tell their parents. In this chapter, we'll learn about conferencing with parents and their children and see how anxiety issues are involved in these conversations.

Planning for Conferences

Lynn is preparing for parent conferences and has consulted me about the conferences for the target students: Christopher, Louis, Leslie, Gregory, and Tim. She explains that it is the parents' option to bring the student to the conference or not. She will ask each of the students whether he or she will be coming. If so, she wants to include them in.

"How do the conferences go?" I ask.

"We usually mail the report cards home and then have the conference to follow up, starting with the parents' questions, showing work from the folders to support the grade. If the students are there, I have them lay out the work and talk about it.

"I try to shift from the grade to what they are learning, how much they are learning. I ask the students to say what they think are their strongest, middle, and weakest areas. I ask them to think about why and write out goals for the next grading period."

I ask, "Now that we have some information on how the kids interrupt, would it fit the conference format to add that? A description of how they seem to interrupt concentration, for example, by not getting engaged or by being too social?"

Lynn reflects, "Remember when teachers used to always say, 'Johnny doesn't apply himself?' What did that ever mean?" We laugh.

She continues, "You can see why I get anxious myself when I don't get the work in from the students and they don't seem to know how that happens. If it happens repeatedly, I have to give a low grade, of course, and then we have to go to conference with a thin folder and no clear explanation. And to get back to the learning, sometimes I know there's learning. I can tell when they give the oral reports, but, you know, conference is about showing it and knowing the next steps for the students.

"Now, in the past the next step would have to be, 'Don't lose your work. Get a buddy to help you, and so on.' But it never solved the problem until we got to their awareness."

I ask, "So now that we've got solid information on everyone but Christopher, how should we proceed?"

She pauses and looks away for a moment. "I've been thinking about past conferences, especially with these parents." She looks at me directly. "I think I know them as well as I usually know the parents . . . except for Christopher's mother. He transferred, remember? So I think I see how they have the same kinds of misgivings that the faculty has. When you did the dialectic triangles for the teachers, I began thinking about the parents."

She hands me some sheets from her desk.

"Dialectics!" I exclaim. "Wow! 'Parental dialectics.' "

"I'll really do it when I'm conferencing with them. I just did these based on my previous contact. Actually, it put some things in perspective for me. Of course, some of the information that I'm using is from the students' journals and some is from what they say and some is from my contact with them."

"Hmm . . ." I say, "these are really your perspective on the parents. Like I always say, they're a theory and have to be checked out with the parents."

"Yes," she says, "but so many of the papers that get lost are ones that go home and don't come back. I mean, the problem is greatly solved for Leslie, Tim, Louis, and Greg. Most of their work is in now. If it isn't, they know why. But there's still the issues that interrupted them, mostly relationship issues. That's what made me anxious. It adds another aspect to the conference, more than talking about the grades and homework. I started thinking about talking to the parents about their relationship with their child and right away I thought they'd have misgivings about that."

"Ah," I say, "I see what you mean. Now I know that you do talk about parent-child relations because you've mentioned a number of conversations to me. What's different about this time?"

"That they expect to come in talking about grades and I expect to talk about their relationships."

"OK." I pause, thinking that Lynn's concentration is being interrupted by fear of loss of control or lack of approval, or something. She's asking me to help her be safe as she explores this new territory. "Let's back up and take the long view here. Both you and the parents are trying to meet the children's needs, yes?"

"Yes."

"So would it help you to start the conference by saying that there are several needs that you want to discuss? Maybe even have them listed on a paper: skill, interpersonal, intrapersonal. You know, that's my language, you do it in yours. Hey, do you want to role play?"

"OK," she says, "Who do you want to be?"

"I'll be you and you be the parent," I say. "You show me what you think a parent will do and also tell me how to play you if I don't get it right, OK?"

"Sure," she says and giggles, a nervous giggle.

"This is a risk for you, isn't it? I want to make sure that you know that I'm aware of that."

She nods and blushes.

Role Playing to Prepare

"OK," she says, "I'm Leslie's mom."

"OK, I'm you! Hi, Mrs. Herrera. Have a seat. I want to conference about Leslie's needs." I show a list of my three categories. "Let's start with academic. You can see that her grades are going up. Do you have any questions? I have Leslie's work folder here."

"I want to know if I'm doing my part, OK?" Lynn can't suppress a tiny note of challenge in her voice that says to me, "OK, deal with this!"

"Well, that's for you to say. I'd like to give you my point of view on Leslie's learning so you can decide if there's anything you want to change. Let's start by taking a few minutes to go over her grades and work."

"All right."

"As you can see, her grades are higher in all subjects, Language Arts, Social Studies, Science, and Math. She's getting B's and C's now, up from C's and D's. The D's have become C's and the C's have become B's. If the trend continues, of course, she could have A's and B's by the next report."

"Uh-huh, that's good."

"The work is coming in and it's solid sixth-grade work." I open the work folder and see Leslie has put the ancient China report right on top. "You've probably seen the videotape of the Ancient China presentation we sent home and maybe you saw the report when she was working on it?"

"I saw it in her handwriting. Looks nice all printed up."

"Yes, it does. Why don't you take this copy home and read it. They found some very interesting information as you know from the videotape."

"OK."

"Now, here's her Cooperation grade: satisfactory. That is for responsible behavior.

"Now, here's her Work Habit grade and it's 'N' for 'needs improvement' for classes where she has trouble concentrating: Social Studies and Language Arts. We've investigated her concentration—meaning Leslie has investigated her own concentration and she's found that she's often got her mind on Alexa and Alexandria. So she's struggling with how to balance her social life with her academic life. She can work with them but she is still figuring out how to concentrate on the work when she's with them. That's what she needs." I point to the N. "Well, I'll take care of that. I know that she's always asking to go over where they all go. If she doesn't take care of this N she can just forget that.

"Hmm. . . ." I take my time to think. "Mrs. Herrera, you know Leslie is expecting that you'll be going home and congratulating her about her grades coming up. And you want to acknowledge that for her, don't you?"

"Yes."

"And at the same time you want to address the N, yes? And would you want to do that in a way that keeps communication open with her, so she'll tell you at first that it *is* a problem and then she'll tell you as it gets more and more in her control?"

"Yes."

"So if she feels punished for this natural urge, then she might try to hide it from you, yes? Because I don't think she can stop wanting it. I think it's part of preadolescence."

"But she can't let it affect her grades."

"I think that she is also concerned about that. She's working hard on being in small groups with those girls and finding out that it's hard to be there and do her own thinking. So she goes back to her own seat. I think she's dealing with it in a way that she'll learn how to handle peer relationships independently. Her Work Habits will reflect that, next time, I hope. She'll be writing her goals based on these grades and I think that's the thing she'll really tackle."

"So should I do nothing?"

"I wonder if there's a middle ground where the two of you could talk about this. Where she feels that you acknowledge her improvement on the one hand," I sketch the double-headed arrow, "and, on the other hand, you let her know that we've discussed that matter related to being with the girls and that you know it's a struggle for her. And then maybe you could ask her if that's how it is and see what she says."

If Parents Won't Listen

"That's it, right there," Lynn says, breaking out of the role play. "I don't think these parents want to ask their kids anything. I think they want to tell them."

"So there can be this big misalignment between the home and the school in terms of how we interact and support the kids," I reflect. "What I honestly don't know, Lynn, is whether you are anxious about it because it's new for you and so you're catastrophizing, or whether it's an actual aspect of the culture that we can use to predict that they won't ask, or something we haven't thought of."

She laughs, "So you support my process so I can support hers so she can support Leslie's. . . ."

I join the laughter, "A community of learners, right? Sounds good when you hear it said and then when you're up to your eyeballs in it you realize that no one knows the answer . . . that we all are learners." I strike my hand off the side of my head to show the impact of the insight.

When the laughter subsides, we have a moment of silence and shaking of heads in wonderment. "This always goes in some direction that I *never* think of," she answers.

"Keeps ya comin' back, doesn't it? I love when communication is this fresh, you know, right in the moment when people's truths just come blooping out."

"Me too. So where are we? I'm going to do this. I'm going to try to facilitate the parents seeing their choices with their kids."

"Sure, go for it. Look, even if it's a cultural issue with them, maybe they would have some interest in being bicultural if they see that there's another possibility. I mean, in the past we've treated parents like they had to park their cultures at the door and just introject the school culture. You're not asking that. You're trying to raise their awareness and leave it with them."

"That's true," she says reflectively. Then adds, with a sparkle in her eye, "I wonder if this is going to work with mothers and flop with dads. Aren't gender differences going to come up? First, the dad has to decide to take my advice about how to relate to his own child and then, what if his child is a girl, is he going to listen to her?"

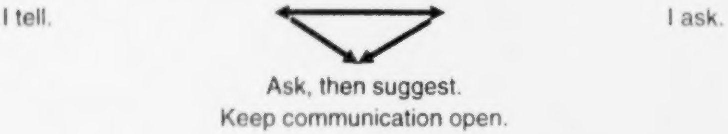
I widen my eyes. "You'll know pretty soon, right? When do these conferences happen?"

"Next week. So let me go over these other triangles with you anyway, knowing the conferences will take their own twists and turns, but just be my sounding board, OK?"

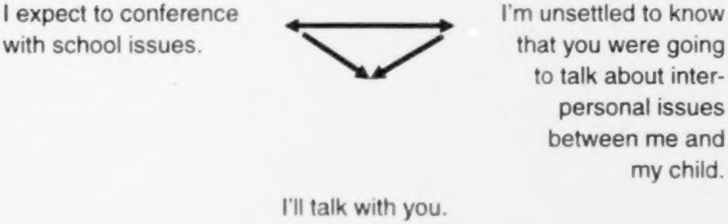
"Sure," I answer.

"Please Hear Your Child"

"So let's do Leslie first," she says. She draws and labels a dialectic triangle.


I tell.
I ask.
Ask, then suggest.
Keep communication open.

"I agree. Now look," I say, labeling a second one, "here's the one for you and Mrs. Herrera."


I expect to conference with school issues.
I'm unsettled to know that you were going to talk about interpersonal issues between me and my child.
I'll talk with you.

"Does that fit for the role play that we did?" I ask.

"Yes, I think so," she answers.

"So there's the dialectic dialogue between the parents and the children and the dialogue between the parents and you."

"Yes."

"I wonder if the parents will get into that old joke about, 'She gets it from your side of the family,' 'No, it's your side.'" We have a laugh. "We'll have heaps o' triangles tracking all this," I say, sweeping my arm to encompass the possibilities of interactions for all the children, parents, relatives in the classroom. "Seriously, though, do you think this conference will go in a way that helps Leslie in the end?"

"I do. I'm sitting here thinking that these parents, moms and dads, have been through this, everybody has. It's the same issue that I have to bring up with Gregory's grandmother about his idolization of Louis. If we can remember together what it's like, maybe we'll be tolerant."

"That's the word, all right. But with awareness and goals that the issue is getting addressed, not deflected like it doesn't matter. It's the central issue for these kids' stage of personality development. If they can manage this internal pressure, maybe they'll get better at managing peer pressure."

"One can always hope," she says, smiling and shaking her head at the magnitude of that problem.

"I Don't Want to Have to Deal With This"

"So," I say brightly, "let's do Christopher. He's needing something. Maybe it's attention from Mom."

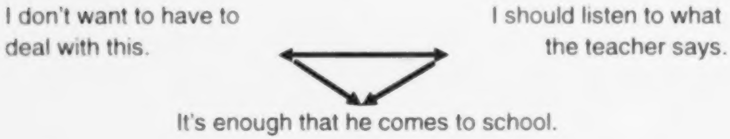
"Well, I've talked with her on the phone. Remember she works at night and leaves him with sister and grandma. My sense of it is that she's really, really tired and doesn't want to deal with school at all."

"OK," I say, sketching the dialectic triangle. "But she doesn't hang up or cut you short, true?"

"True."

"So she's listening. Maybe she wants you to hear that it's all she can do to get him here right now."

"That fits," Lynn answers, nodding her head.


I don't want to have to deal with this.
I should listen to what the teacher says.
It's enough that he comes to school.

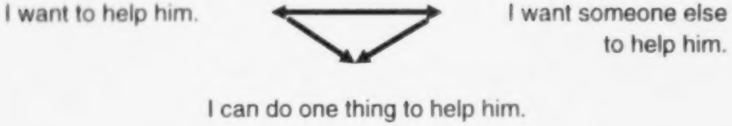
"And I know he misses a lot. His grades are failing still, right?"

"Right. But he knows he'll be passed on. He's said that."

"And his interruptions are a mystery, right? He doesn't talk, doesn't journal. We need to refer for educational therapy and maybe psychotherapy on this, yes?"

"I think so," she says. "I'll refer to child study," she says sadly.

"So, how might the conference go?" I ask rhetorically while I label a triangle. "Here's my best case scenario. It's based on the pace of life for single moms and the possibility that she's been rebuffed by that school they transferred from. In my experience, I've always had to give moral support while they do one first step. I think that he might just need her to spend time with him. She maybe needs to see that her attention is special, that she is a special person. Just hypothesizing, of course."


I want to help him.
I want someone else to help him.
I can do one thing to help him.

"No, you might be on to something based on what I've gathered. I think he needs some male contact, too, and I'm going to inquire about that," Lynn says. She adds the diagram to her pile.

ADHD, Anxiety, or Both?

We have a moment of silence. Then I say, "Opposite situation: Tim, correct?"

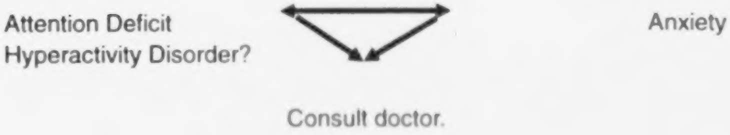
"Yes! I'm not sure that he needs to be on meds. I mean, they've helped him focus. But what if awareness could have done it as well as medication?"

"Yeah," I answer, "but you've got the additional aspect that he believes he needs the drug. How could that change?"

"I don't know. But I can talk completely openly with the parents. They are very involved with all their children. I had his sister two years ago."

"So how did you think of approaching it?" I ask.

She passes me her diagram.


Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder?
Anxiety
Consult doctor.

"Well, that's succinct. What's your best case scenario for the interaction with the doctor?"

"Depends on who they go to. Sometimes the doctor will have them take the child off the drug during vacation, sometimes they'll change the dose or the schedule."

"If the parents ask for your advice. . . ?"

"First, I'd say, 'Involve Tim in this.' "

"Right on."

"Then I'd have Tim say when he used to feel the impulsivity, because it was more heightened at some times than others. Maybe the doctor has that in the history or in his records. Maybe his mom remembers, or dad." She rolls her eyes, catching her own gender bias. "Or I'd say try to back him down, maybe off. I don't know any more than that."

"Then that's the thing to say, I think."

She makes a note on her sheet for Tim.

"How are we doing?"

"We're done!"

"Seems like this was a worthwhile meeting."

"Very. It's all the fallout from that paradigm shift you like to talk about," she says smiling.

"Yes, I suppose that's as good a place as any to pin it. But seriously, would you say that you're feeling ready for conferences because . . ."

"Because I took time to concentrate on them. . . ? Oh no! The 'C word!' It's everywhere!"

We laugh and then she continues, "So I took time and focused . . ."

"That's great to hear!" I add. "I love that you take credit for your own effort. If you would have said, 'Oh, I can only do it with your help,' I'd think we'd still have a long way to go with this to get to where you have the confidence to put your own stamp on it."

She nods in agreement.

"Gimme a hug and lemme know how it goes."

She e-mailed after conferences to say that our predictions had been accurate. The big surprise was that Christopher had shown up at the conference with his mom and she had gotten him to open up. He, too, was pining away for friends. He was absent because of too much late-night television; after grandma and sister had fallen asleep in the living room he was still awake. Lynn, mom, and Christopher brainstormed possible solutions and wrote a contract for improved attendance.

The last e-mail said that the whole issue of belongingness had caused her to build some literature on that theme into the language arts, to introduce students to sociology and show them some of her texts from her sociology classes. She felt that they really needed that as their social studies along with the psychology in the dialectic. Along with ancient China, of course, she added with a <grin>.

My reply e-mail read:

Of course! Isn't that what school is all about? <grin>

RESOURCE A: ACADEMIC ANXIETY READING LIST

Writing

Elbow, P. (1973). *Writing without teachers.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Elbow's own writing style is highly self-revealing, hence comforting to most of his vast readership. The section "Desperation Writing" (p. 60) and following offer practical ways to work through self-doubt issues.

Flynn, T., & King, M. (1993). *Dynamics of the writing conference: Social and cognitive interaction.* Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

A compendium of the best sessions at the East Central Writing Centers Association conferences. Under the general goal of using the writing conference to foster higher-order thinking, many of the authors broach ways of addressing writing anxiety. Most relevant are David Taylor, "A Counseling Approach to Writing Conferences," and Paula Oye, "Writing Problems Beyond the Classroom: The Confidence Problem."

Nelson, V. (1993). *On writer's block: A new approach to creativity.* New York: Houghton Mifflin.

Nelson sees writer's block as a case of creative block. She honors the silence as part of the creative process and suggests experiments for self-encounters so that the inner conflicts can be resolved.

Rose, M. (Ed.) (1985). *When a writer can't write.* New York: Guilford Press.

Ten essays that span aspects of writer's block. Included are Donald Graves's case study, which reveals three categories of blocks for young novices; Donald Murray's enjoinder not to mistake "the essential delay" for a block, and Robert Boice's extensive review of psychotherapies for writer's block.

Mathematics

Arem, C. (1993). *Conquering math anxiety: A self-help workbook.* Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.

An exercise book that integrates tips to build confidence and prevent anxiety. Adaptable to elementary students.

Buxton, L. (1991). *Math panic.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Buxton is a prominent mathematics educator in Britain who is concerned with the traumatic autobiographical sketches he hears about mathematics education. This has influenced his interest in "emotional considerations" about math anxiety. His narratives show how he organizes math material and interacts with highly anxious students to help them recover from their panic.

Clawson, C. C. (1991). *Conquering Math Phobia: A Painless Primer.* New York: Wiley.

Clawson's strategy for resolving anxiety is to first acknowledge it and then reconceptualize math as a "doable" subject. He takes a more curricular than psychological approach to math phobia, suggesting how to teach math in a less anxiety-provoking way.

Hanson, K. (1992). *Teaching mathematics effectively and equitably to females.* Trends and Issues No. 17. Columbia University, NY: ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education, Institute for Urban and Minority Education.

Much of math anxiety is a gender-related issue; females lack self-efficacy. Hanson attributes this to the classroom conversations that send negative signals to females. She recommends awareness-raising in staff development for math teachers as a starting point.

Immergut, B., & Smith, J. B. (1994). *Arithmetic and Algebra Again*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

As with Clawson, Immergut and Smith take a curricular approach, suggesting that arithmetic and algebra can be presented in ways that are not anxiety inducing.

MacNeal, E. (1994). *Mathsemantics: Making numbers talk sense*. New York: Penguin Books.

MacNeal contrasts academic approaches with mathematical concepts that can be developed naturally during play as "Proposition 15: Until you work it out for yourself, two plus two makes four only because the teacher says so" (p. 125).

Martinez, J., with Martinez, N. (1996). *Math without fear: A guide for preventing math anxiety in children*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

This book is aimed at the math-anxious elementary teacher and students. Grounded in cognitive psychology, the Martinezes demonstrate how to teach math and integrate the affective. The result is a lively and humane methods book.

Tobias, S. (1978). *Overcoming math anxiety*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

This book is comprehensive, relating anxiety to self-concept, gender, and rote teaching methods. Many alternatives are given, including meaningful teaching and counseling. This book is often termed a classic in the anxiety literature.

Zaslavsky, C. (1994). *Fear of math: How to get over it and get on with your life*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Zaslavsky first asserts that math anxiety stems from a combination of negative cultural messages (race, ethnicity, gender, class) and poor teaching methods. Then she shows how real-world math is not as anxiety-provoking as academic math. She includes suggestions for family math and lists resources.

Speech

Daly, J. A., & McCroskey, J. C. (Eds.). (1984). *Avoiding communication: Shyness, reticence, and communication apprehension.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Social anxiety is the overarching category for these selections. Seventeen authors combine to explicate various approaches to the description, measurement, and remediation of communication avoidance and anxiety.

McDaniel, R. (1994). *Scared speechless: Public speaking step by step.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

The approach of this author is to first deal with "taking advantage of your nervousness" and then move to effective speech preparation strategies. Anxiety is addressed through PREP: positive imaging, relaxing, exercising, and practicing (p. 14).

Rubin, B. J. (1995). *Stage Fright Handbook.* Alexandria, VA: Decision-Making Systems.

Burton Rubin's stage fright plagued him for years. Today he is a therapist who has elucidated 18 guidelines for working through issues of stage fright. His approach is similar to that of this book.

Reading

Ciani, A. (Ed.) (1981). *Motivating reluctant readers.* Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Ten authors suggest a wide range of motivational ideas centering on reading for valid purposes (from the students' points of view) and on authentic materials.

Genile, L., & McMillan, M. (1987). *Stress and reading difficulties.* Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Approaches anxiety under the rubric of stress, suggesting either "flight" or "fight" as the responses. Concerned with the inner dialogue of each type as well as curriculum concerns. Offers an assessment instrument and differential interventions throughout the lesson cycle for each type of response. A good combination.

Newman, A., & Beverstock, C. (1990). *Adult literacy: Contexts and challenges.* Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Adult literacy workers are often the ones who address long-standing anxiety and school phobia issues. In addition to describing their own students, Newman and Beverstock review the research and point out how unfinished academic anxiety issues have been addressed by other adult literacy workers (p. 122-167).

Oldfather, P. (1994). *When students do not feel motivated for literacy learning: How a responsive classroom culture helps.* Reading Research Report No. 8. Athens, GA: University of Georgia; College Park, MD: University of Maryland, National Reading Research Center.

Smith, F. (1983). Demonstration, engagement, sensitivity. In F. Smith (Ed.), *Essays into literacy* (pp. 104-105). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Smith's concept of "sensitivity" as the absence of an expectation that learning will be difficult expresses a kind of "unawareness" as described in this book.

Ungerleider, D. F. (1985). *Reading, writing, and rage: The terrible price paid by victims of school failure.* Rolling Hills, CA: Jalmar Press.

A poignant narrative that reveals the principles employed by an educational therapist as she advocates and intervenes on behalf of a youngster in her private practice.

Williams, W. M. (1996). *The reluctant reader.* New York: Warner Books.

Presents typical cases of reluctant reading, one of which is "fear of failure." Offers strategies to work through the issues.

Wurman, R. S. (1990). *Information anxiety: What to do when information doesn't tell you what you need to know.* New York: Bantam.

Information anxiety is about falling behind in the information age. Wurman's book is a tour de force of exhibits that make information interesting and curiosity provoking, a curricular approach. The final chapter contains prescriptions for how to manage your personal information deluge from the inside out, a psychological approach.

Science

Krauss, L. M. (1993). *Fear of physics: A guide for the perplexed.* New York: Basic Books.

Krauss acknowledges the fear of physics and quickly moves to his curricular approach to make it comprehensible.

Mallow, J. V. (1986). *Science anxiety: Fear of science and how to overcome it.* Clearwater, FL: H & H Publishing Co.

Describes the science anxiety clinic at Loyola University in Chicago, which has found success through the Rational Emotive Therapy approach of Albert Ellis.

Language Learning

Horwitz, E. K., & Young, D. J. (Eds.) (1991). *Language anxiety: From theory and research to classroom implications.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Twenty-four contributors have written 14 articles that encompass anxiety in language learning, including ESL. Both therapeutic and curricular strategies are described for intervention of anxiety in teachers as well as students. Of particular relevance are (1) the chapter by April Koch and Tracey Terrell on the affective responses of students to Terrell's natural approach to teaching activities, and (2) the many classroom activities suggested in the final four chapters.

General School Anxieties

Berenstain, S., & Berenstain, J. (1986). *The Berenstain bears' trouble at school.* New York: Random House.

This "First Time" book will help primary grade students understand how failure to concentrate gets negative results.

Bourne, E. (1990). *The anxiety and phobia workbook.* Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications.

Of special interest is the chapter on "Self Talk" and the strategy of making "counterstatements" for each negative self-statement (pp. 151-182).

Brett, D. (1988). *Annie stories.* New York: Workman Publishing.

How to create stories for common childhood anxieties such as nightmares and separating to attend school. Each example story is footnoted with guidelines such as this one that expresses raising awareness: "Although the heroine is feeling scared and nervous, take care to also highlight some of her strong points. When people feel unsure of themselves they often forget that they have any strengths at all" (p. 110).

Curwin, R. (1992). *Rediscovering hope: Our greatest teaching strategy.* Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service.

Curwin asserts that at the core of solving school behavior and emotional problems is a process by which students take responsibility for their learning. Of special interest is the section on the use of paradox based on Victor Frankl's existential "logotherapy." This uses paradoxical suggestion to exaggerate undesirable behavior and sets up a dialectical tension between compliance and resistance. If the student resists the suggestion, he or she complies (pp. 82-84).

Elbow, P. (1986). *Embracing contraries.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Elbow speaks eloquently of the dialectical nature of the teaching and learning processes. See especially the chapter on "The Value of the Dialectic" in which he allows that "Searching for contradiction and affirming both sides can allow you to find both the limitations of the system in which you are working and a way to break out of it" (p. 243).

Elchoness, M. (1992). *Why do kids need feelings? A guide to healthy emotions.* Ventura, CA: Monroe Press.

In this adventure, suitable for upper elementary and adaptable for middle school, Daniel learns about feelings and how people can shut them off, resulting in lack of awareness of the type described in dialectic dialogue. A parent/teacher discussion guide is available.

Faber, A., & Mazlish, E. (1980). *How to talk so kids will listen and listen so kids will talk.* New York: Avon Books.

An introduction to dialoguing with some examples related to school concerns. Based on the work of Haim Ginott, renowned child psychologist. Excellent resource for anyone who is beginning to hear the child's phenomenology.

Metcalf, L. (1995). *Counseling toward solutions: A practical solution-focused program for working with students, teachers, and parents.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: The Centre for Applied Research in Education.

The dialogic approach taught in this book is solution-focused brief therapy for all manner of academic issues. Compatible with a dialectic dialogue in that it asks the student to think of a time when he or she didn't have the problem, i.e., identify an exception, and figure out how to use that strategy in the present situation.

Mohr, C., Nixon, D., & Vickers, S. (1991). *Books that heal: A whole language approach.* Englewood, CO: Teacher Ideas Press.

In the tradition of bibliotherapy, the authors provide lesson ideas and resource material for core literature books dealing with sensitive issues such as divorce. For example, in *Dear Mr. Henshaw* (Beverly Cleary) Leigh Botts believes he is disliked for being the "mediumest" in his class, a rather anxiety-provoking thought.

Waters, V. (1980). *Rational stories for children.* New York: Institute for Rational-Emotive Therapy.

A source of stories to read to children along with detailed discussion guides that help children learn that fear and anger underlie their irrational thoughts (a type of introjection in Gestalt theory).

RESOURCE B: SAMPLE JOURNAL ENTRIES

Regular Writing Journals

> Math was borring. As usual. I have Mrs. Gonzoles. People always bug me. I don't know why but they always bug me. I hate being buged by alot of these kids. One of these day's ill be respected. I sweer. Today's been a hard day. I can't think.
>
> Today was still boring. I have study hall tomorrow. Mrs. Gonzoles sais I haven't been doing my work latly. Thats a lie and she knows it. Shes been telling my mom that I havent been doing my homework. I youst hate doing that. Maybe one of these days she might tell my mom that I have been doing my homework. Maybe she tells my mom that I haven't been doing my homework because she hates my religion. I will find out one of these days.
>
> Today I had extra recess. We had 15 minutes extra. I used that time wisley. I keeped playing Oregon Trail. I had a yellow card, I think. I am going to get my yo-yo, "The Brain". I am so lucky to have a family like my mom and dad. They love me and I love them. They protect me when I need protection, they help me when I need help. That's what parents are for. So I had a good day today.

Concentration, Interruption, Recovery Journals

> I had an internal yesterday. It was from home. Fighting with my sister at home. It took me 1 hour to recover.
>
> I was listening to Miss Noonan when Oscar dropped his pencil. I watched him pick it up. He cralled under the desk and was bumping around making noise. (External Interruption) I couldn't hear the teacher. I had to recover for 15 seconds and remember where I had left off in my brain.
>
> I was reading in with Miss Noonan at the table when I lost my place when it was my turn. (Internal?) I was recovered by Maria and Geraldo who told me where I was for about 1 minute.
>
> I lost my concentration on solving the math problem when Mrs. Gonzoles asked me to come and write it on the board. I was nervus and afraid that I would not get it right. (Internal) I was able to recover after Mrs. Gonzoles told me to take my time. It took about 3 minutes for me to finish the problem.
>
> I was interrupted when Miss Noonan told Louis to pull a card. I watched Louis for a little while before I was able to concentrate on what Miss Noonan was saying. It took 15-20 seconds. (external)
>
> I lost my concentration when Lee tried to look at my paper during the test. (ext.) I had to cover my paper with my arm. Mrs. Gonzoles walked by and looked at Lee's paper. I recovered but I was worried that he might try to copy again if I didn't keep my paper covered. (Int.)

Translations for LEP Students

> I could not understand what the P.E. coach was trying to say. He spoke too fast. I was able to recover after I asked Christofer to explain what the coach was saying. Some of Christofer's explanation did not make sense, so I looked at what everyone else was doing and copied them. It took about 5 minutes.
>
> I was reading and lost my concentration when I got stuck on a word. Some of the students laughed. I couldn't recover completely because I was afraid at being laughed at again. Miss Noonan said not to laugh because we all get stuck. I wanted to stop reading.

RESOURCE C: CONCENTRATION AND INTERRUPTION AS MENTAL METABOLISM

	Mental Metabolism	
Concentration	**The Lesson Cycle**	**Interruption**
I have an appetite for ideas.	Attend	I don't check my appetite.
I decide I'm hungry for knowledge. I concentrate on what the teacher is saying and what I want to know something about what we're studying.	Set Purpose	I don't really decide if I'm hungry or not. I don't concentrate on the lesson. I'm interrupted by something else.
I'm really concentrating. I brainstorm some things I might learn that would nourish my mind.	Brainstorm	I don't brainstorm because I don't have a purpose. I'm partly concentrating, partly interrupted.

Concentration	**The Lesson Cycle**	**Interruption**
I concentrate on picking out the knowledge that matches my purpose and nourishes my mind.	Choose	Without a purpose or brainstormed choices, I have to choose something just to get by.
I double check my choice. If it doesn't feel right to me I go back, choose again, and check to see if the new choice feels right.	Monitor	Without a personal choice, I don't have a personal choice to monitor. I may feel angry with myself.
I reflect on my choosing and monitoring. I made an effort and learned what I wanted to know.	Reflect	What happened . . . do I have back luck? Is there something wrong with me?
I'm done. I satisfied my hunger. I feel contented or glad.	End	I can't stop because I'm still wondering. I feel sad or angry.
No appetite right now.	Back to Attend	I'm not really finished. I didn't get nourished.

RESOURCE D: COMPARISON OF MENTAL METABOLISM WITH NOURISHING AND UNNOURISHING PHYSICAL METABOLISM

Physical Metabolism: Nourishing	*"Mental" Metabolism*	*Physical Metabolism: Unnourishing*
I have an appetite.	Attend	I don't know . . . I'm not attending.
I decide I'm hungry, need to eat.	Set Purpose	I ignore or deny my hunger.
I think of what would taste just right and be nourishing for right now.	Brainstorm	I think of my familiar order or what it would be correct or order.
I order the tastiest to me.	Choose	I order the "same old" or what I think I should.
I eat, chew thoroughly, I savor! I swallow.	Monitor	I seem to have missed something.

Physical Metabolism: Nourishing	*"Mental" Metabolism*	*Physical Metabolism: Unnourishing*
I had exactly what I was hungry for.	Reflect	I have bad luck in this area.
I'm finished.	End	I'm still wondering.
I don't have an appetite.	Back to Attend	I'm not really finished.

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